

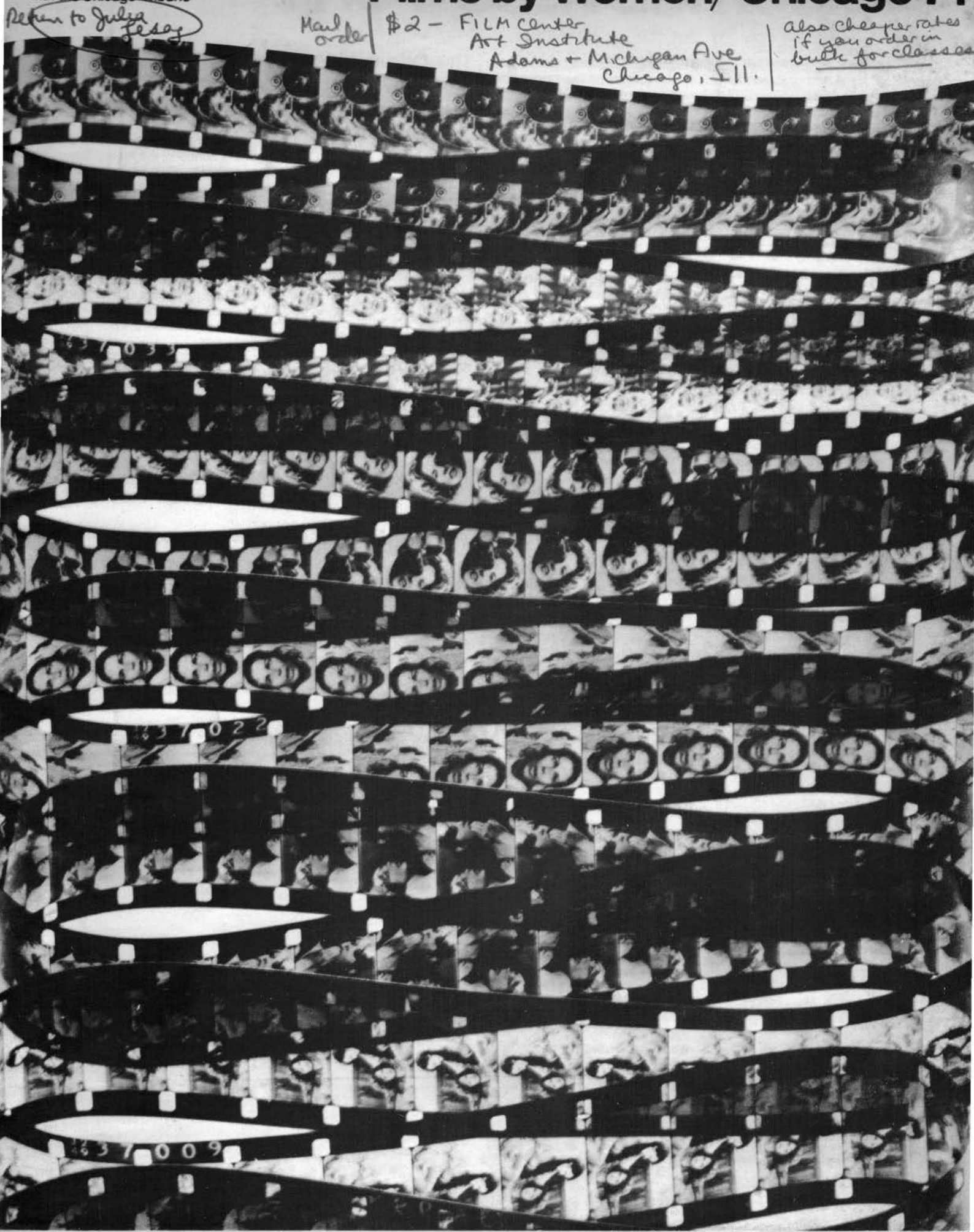
Film Center of the Art Institute  
with the Chicago Tribune

# Films by Women/Chicago '74

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# Welcome

The festival planning committee wishes to express its appreciation to the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and The Chicago Tribune for their sponsorship of FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74. Without their generous contributions, a two-week festival of women's films would have remained a great idea, too impractical to become a reality.

We would also like to thank the following for their help:

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Women and Film

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#### *Film Comment*

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Zipporah Films

## The Origin of the Film Festival

The women's film festival you are attending couldn't have happened without the help of the United States Army. Last September I was in Washington, D. C., for two weeks of Army Reserve "summer camp." Ads in the *Washington Post* announced a women's film festival at the Janus Theater on Connecticut Avenue.

I wrote two articles for the *Tribune* about that festival. The first identified the special point of view of Mireille Dansereau's *Dream Life*, one of the festival's better offerings.

*Dream Life* follows the random thoughts and actions of two teenage French Canadian girls. Midway thru the film the girls go out for a drive and talk about the men of their dreams. As they pause at a stop-light, a car carrying four teen-age boys pulls alongside. The boys call out some suggestive remarks. The girls laugh and drive away.

A routine scene? Yes, except for one thing.

In filming the attempted pick-up, director Dansereau placed her camera behind the girls, focused on the boys and showed us what an adolescent proposition looks like from the female point of view.

Because virtually all commercial feature films are written, directed and photographed by men, it is not surprising that their literary, conceptual and physical points of view are, for the most part, from behind and inside male heads.

Seeing *Dream Life* gave me an appetite for more films conceived and shot from the female point of view. Not because they necessarily would be better, but because they

would be different.

The second article, published the following day, called for a women's film festival in Chicago, suggesting that:

"The adventurous Film Center at the School of the Art Institute is the logical location for a women's film festival. The Film Center already has presented individual evenings of women's films. Now is the time for a more ambitious project."

The same article promised an organizational meeting at the *Tribune*. I called two friends (Ruby Rich of the Film Center and Pat Erens at Northwestern University) and asked them to invite their friends.

The first organizational meeting was held Dec. 6, 1973, in the *Tribune's* Campbell Hall. Eighteen women and one man attended. I tried to lead the discussion and was lucky to escape with my chauvinism in one piece. The women seized control. There would be no stopping them. The Midwest's first major women's film festival was on its way!

*Gene Siskel*

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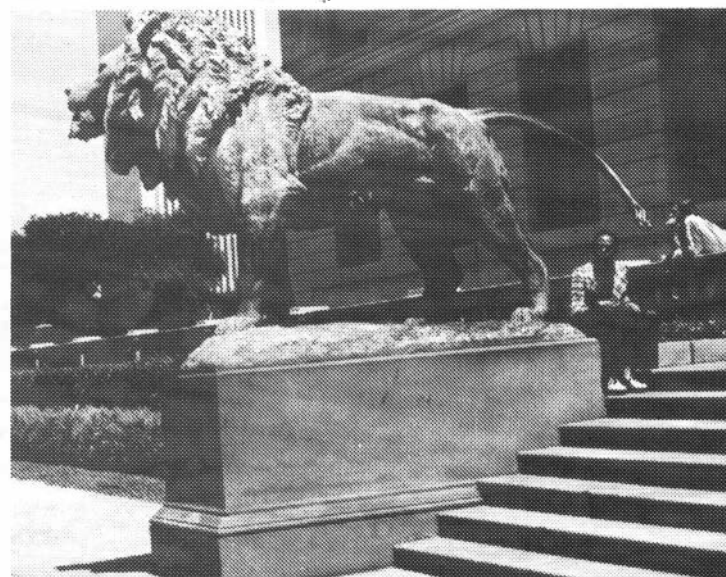
*Gene Siskel is film critic for The Chicago Tribune.*

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*Dianne Burgis is responsible for the festival's promotional graphics. She is the art director in the Tribune's promotional art department. She is a member of NOW and a director of ERA Central.*

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The articles in this booklet reflect the opinions of the individual authors and are not necessarily the opinions of the general committee for Films By Women Chicago '74, the Film Center of the Art Institute, or the Chicago Tribune.



# The Festival

The "women's film." What does it mean?

If you're a movie buff, you'll probably connect the term to the Hollywood melodramas of the 30's and the 40's—the vehicles of Joan Crawford, Barbara Stanwyck and others. Despite the impressive performances of these actresses, their films were tagged with unfortunate nicknames that invariably trivialized their thematic concerns and emotional range. Branded "sob stories" or "weepers," the genre was categorically dismissed as second-rate in terms of subject matter, treatment, production values and audience sophistication. Although such films would be praised, in later years, for their lack of pretension and economy of means, the patriarchal critics of the day looked down on the women's film. It was only a movie, wasn't it?

Audiences of women knew better. They went to the movies regularly to share the misadventures of Stella Dallas and Mildred Pierce, to contemplate women of resilience and character. They readily accepted the models of femininity which the films projected. Often, the images they perceived were forceful and, sometimes, they were downright gutsy; however, the range of choices that each heroine was free to select was circumscribed within the limits of sexist ideology. If a woman pursued a career actively, it was pointed out with great pains her appeal to the opposite sex suffered proportionately. Sooner or later, she would have to decide between a lonely life of material success or a fruitful position at home as wife and mother. Like a sensible girl (according to the norms prescribed by the text), she would opt for the latter choice.

Times have changed. The meaning of the women's film has changed too; it has come to reflect a new assumption—that the films that articulate the experiences of women with the greatest fidelity and clarity are those films made by women. In consequence, a newly engendered consciousness of women's art prompts us to examine our roots in the history of film. We have learned that women have participated in all aspects of the industry from the earliest days: they have been scenarists, editors, cinematographers, sound engineers and, of course, directors. Nowadays, when the film director's function is usually granted

superstar status and special critical attention, it seems appropriate to pay tribute to those women who were able to work within or outside of a system that was not especially cordial to their labors.

This was the common purpose that brought together a group of local women with a mutual interest in film. We wanted to provide a showcase for a series of exceptional films directed by women—films that were as good as or better than the works of their masculine counterparts, but had never found wide audiences due to the quirks and inequities of the mass distribution system. With the sponsorship of the Chicago Tribune and the Film Center of the Art Institute, the event took shape; FILMS BY WOMEN CHICAGO '74, a selection of the best of women's international cinema, is the result of our combined efforts.

We are finally able to view women who transcend the restricted model that a male establishment deemed "feminine." The characterization of women in these films comments on conventional values and norms by negating, reversing and transforming the stereotypical portraits of women.

Note the variety of women we see on the screen. They appear as prostitutes (*A Very Curious Girl*), mothers (*Roseland, Joyce at 34, Loving Couples*), artists (*Womenhouse, Antonia*), career women (*Working Girls, Christopher, Strong*), ingenues (*The Wild Party, Daisies, Dream Life*), lesbians (*Madchen In Uniform, Pit of Loneliness*), goddesses (*Cleo From Five to Seven*), rape victims (*Outrage, Peasant Women of Ryazan*) and much more.

At times these directors are not concerned with explicitly feminist questions (*Attica, The Promised Lands*); these works have been included to give an indication of the many directions that women filmmakers have taken. Besides giving exposure to the work of historically significant directors and emerging talents, we wanted to give FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74 a regional orientation. In a special evening program, the works of midwest filmmakers will be featured. Furthermore, we have designed a series of workshops that address a variety of interests: Political Filmmaking, Animation, Commercial Filmmaking, and the Image of Women in Film. In addition, a video workshop will play

tapes made by women from all over the country; it will also offer a "hands-on" demonstration of a new media system that women are appropriating for artistic and political ends.

We welcome you to FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74; we hope that you participate fully in the festival.

*Stephanie Goldberg*

*Stephanie Goldberg both writes on films and makes them.*

## The Festival Committee

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## A History of Women and Films

Few movie-goers would dispute the screen's seductive power to influence our lives and attitudes. Edgar Morin has pointed out, *"the stars guide our manners, gestures, poses, attitudes, ecstatic sighs . . . sincere regrets . . . the way we light a cigarette, exhale the smoke, the way we lift a glass . . . the way we wave or tip our hat, the way we make roguish, profound, tragic faces, decline an invitation, accept a present, refuse or permit a kiss."* There is little doubt that the vast majority of films which pour out of "the Hollywood dream factory" affect millions of viewers. But whose fantasies do they represent? For the most part they are the projected fantasies of the males who have dominated the industry—such fantasies as child-like virgins, idealized mothers, wicked whores, and sex goddesses.

In response to these portrayals, **FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74** presents films about women made by women directors.

Women directors are not a new phenomenon despite the fact that recognition of women's contributions to film is only currently being acknowledged. Women's role in the cinema dates as far back as 1896—one year after the first projected film. In that year Alice Guy, working for producer Leon Gaumont, was given the responsibility of directing the company's first fiction films. Proceeding along the same lines as George Melies, she drew on similar resources. Between 1897 and 1906 she directed a long list of films based on fairy tales, myths, Biblical stories, and original comedies. She emigrated to America in 1907 with her husband, Herbert Blache, and continued to direct for their own production company, Solax, until 1915. As a director of over 270 silent films, Guy is remembered as a prolific pioneer and enterprising executive.

During Hollywood's formative years, many women were employed as writers, editors, and directors. From 1913 to 1927 26 women worked behind the camera, directing films about everything from women's suffrage to girls-on-the-make. The majority of these women owed their opportunities to Universal's Carl Laemmle and Paramount's Adolph Zukor, producers who were willing to take risks by countering

prevalent attitudes about "the place of women" and their inability to handle cameras and crews.

Of the women who worked in Hollywood during this early period, Lois Weber was one of the most prolific. She made her first film in 1913. By 1916 she managed her own production company—leased to her by Universal Studios. She began with the controversial issue of birth control and ended her career in 1927 with a series of exploitation films which focused on loose women and infidelity. Unfortunately much of the work done by the other female directors has been lost through neglect or remains inaccessible.

During this same period several successful actresses managed to direct themselves in films, although none received screen credit. Among this group were Mabel Normand, Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford, and Alla Nazimova. Many women were active as writers. Prodigious Anita Loos turned out over 200 scenarios for Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith, as well as her famous **GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES**. June Mathis scripted several classics of the silent period, including **BLOOD AND SAND**, **GREED**, and **BEN HUR**.

Following in the footsteps of Alice Guy, several women in Europe were active during the silent era as directors and innovators. Among those whose contributions were unique are Germaine Dulac in France, Lotte Reiniger in Germany, and Esther Shub in Russia. As an active member of the post-war avant-garde, Dulac was one of the first artists to use film for surrealist expression. Her masterpieces, **THE SMILING MADAME BEUDET** (1923) and **THE SEASHELL AND THE CLERGYMAN** (1927), exploit cinema's fullest capabilities to depict the subjective reality of her female protagonists. As such these works exist as milestones of experimental cinema as well as landmarks in women's history.

In Germany Lotte Reiniger was pioneering the art of film animation. In 1919 she developed the use of animated-silhouette figures which she later utilized in the first full-length animated film, **THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE ACHMED** (1923-26). Reiniger has remained a leader in the field for the last fifty years and has inspired many women, who have found in animation an outlet for their creative talents and an alternative to feature filmmaking.

Working without the essential

Lois Weber



tools of filmmaking (camera and film stock), Esther Shub produced the first compilation film, **THE FALL OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY** (1927), in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Revolution. By overcoming these limitations Shub created a totally new approach to film which has influenced documentary production ever since. In the same year Olga Preobrajenskaia directed her masterpiece **PEASANT WOMEN OF RYAZAN**, which revived pre-Kuleshovian notions of narrative development.

With the emergence of sound in America in 1927, few women found steady employment in jobs other than screenwriting. More numerous than in any other period in Hollywood history, the ranks of women screen writers were filled by talents like Frances Marion, Zoe Akins, Anita Loos, Jane Murn, and Jane Farnum. In the forties Leigh Brackett joined the roster.

Some women continued as editors, such as Margaret Booth, who eventually became one of M-G-M's top executives. But only one woman survived the transition to sound in the capacity of a director—Dorothy Arzner. It is therefore fitting that **FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74** should dedicate part of this festival to the first retrospective of her work. Beginning her career as an editor, she made her

first film for Paramount in 1972. During a career which lasted until 1943, she directed strong female actresses, including Katharine Hepburn, Rosalind Russell, Claudette Colbert, Sylvia Sydney, Lucille Ball, and Clara Bow, in roles which accentuated the intelligent, independent aspects of the female personality.

Apart from Arzner, the only women of note who made commercial films during the dark period of the thirties and forties were Leontine Sagan and Leni Riefenstahl in Germany. Sagan's **MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM** (1931) marked her debut as a film director; her career was cut short by the changing conditions of Nazi Germany. The film is a sensitive portrayal of life in a girls' boarding school and the tragic results of authoritarianism. The film clearly foreshadows what was to come in Germany.

Also in Germany, Riefenstahl was raising the art of the documentary to new heights. Beginning as an actress in the German "mountain films" similar to her own **THE BLUE LIGHT** (1932), she emerged as an international figure with the completion of **TRIUMPH OF THE WILL** (1934) and **OLYMPIA** (1936-8), proving that women were capable of marshalling large crews with great expertise.

By the forties the position of women vis-a-vis film had come to a stalemate. It was at this moment that women artists realized the potential of film as a medium for personal expression. Shut out of the industry, they began to utilize 16mm equipment, pushing filmmaking in new directions. Beginning with the experiments of Maya Deren in the mid-forties, filmmakers like Marie Menken and Shirley Clarke developed the art of the independent cinema in America. Deren's *MESHERS OF THE AFTERNOON* (1943), as well as her later dance films, were responsible for inspiring a whole generation of young filmmakers. Along with other members of the New York underground, she fought to establish an adequate means of distributing and screening these new works through the establishment of co-operatives, festivals, and film societies.

Simultaneous with the emergence of independent filmmaking, women gained a small foothold in the industry. Ida Lupino began supplementing her acting career with directing. By appearing in her own work she re-established a tradition begun by famous actresses before her.

By the sixties women once again appeared in great numbers as directors of independent and commercial productions. In Europe Mai Zetterling, Agnes Varda, Lina Wertmüller, Nelly Kaplan, Liliana Cavani, Jacqueline Audry, Marguerite Duras, Muriel Box, and Mary Ellen Bute turned out feature films. In Eastern Europe they were joined by artists including Vera Chytilová, Marta Meszáros, Eva Zsures, Anna Sokolowska, and Judit Elek. Ranging from avant-garde experiments to vehicles of popular entertainment, these works all helped redefine the image of women and their roles in contemporary society.

In America Shirley Clarke produced independent features in 16mm such as *THE CONNECTION*, *THE COOL WORLD*, and *PORTRAIT OF JASON*. Directors like Barbara Peeters and Stephanie Rothman, who also prefer to work in low-budget productions, turned out exploitation films like *BURY ME AN ANGEL* and *STUDENT NURSES*.

Critic/writer Susan Sontag directed her first film, *BROTHER CARL* (1969), in Sweden and Sylvia Spring's low-budget *MADELEINE IS* (1969) became the first Canadian feature directed by a

woman since 1930. Also in Canada, Mireille Dansereau began making short biographies, while Joyce Wieland produced experimental works.

At the same time women in the Orient and in third-world countries also took over directorial responsibilities. In Hong Kong, Shu Shuen and Go Bo Se directed historical dramas and action features. Margot Benaceraf of Venezuela made her first full-length film, *ARAYA*, as early as 1958.

Entering the seventies, the prospects for women seem brighter than ever. Features directed by Elaine May, Lina Wertmüller, and Cinda Firestone have found commercial bookings and garnered glowing critical reviews. Actresses such as Anna Karina and Barbara Loden have chosen to work behind the camera as well as on the screen, while folk-singer Judy Collins (and her co-director Jill Godmilow) has begun a second career in film.

Women like Jacque Raynal, Annie Tresgot, and Elda Tattoli, who have worked as editors, scriptwriters, and actresses, are now turning to directing. New talent emerges every year. In America women are actively pursuing careers in all areas of production. Dede Allen has gained a reputation as a leading film editor. Scriptwriters like Eleanor Perry and Fay Kanin have established solid careers. In April Julia Phillips became the first woman in history to receive an Oscar as a producer.

Many women remain committed to experimental and political filmmaking. To name a few of the most prominent: Storm de Hirsch, Claudia Weil, Gunvor Nelson, Freude Bartlett, Julia Reichert, Nell Cox, Liane Brandon, Abigail Child, Connie Beeson, Amalie Rothschild, Chick Strand, and Sheila Page; and in Chicago, Royanne Rosenberg. In addition, many women are working in groups producing cooperative films and videotapes.

As we move forward into the second part of the decade, there is an expansive feeling. There still remains much work to be done. However, the signs are auspicious, including *FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74*.

*Patricia Erens*

*Patricia Erens is working on her dissertation in film at Northwestern University. She also teaches film at the University of Chicago Extension and has published articles and reviews in various film journals.*

## Early Women Directors—Alice Guy Blaché, Cleo Madison, Lois Weber

**Distributor: American Film Institute**

In the first two decades of this century there were more than a dozen women film directors at work in America, not to mention at least three camerawomen. Examples of the work of three women directors from this period have been preserved in the American Film Institute Collection at the Library of Congress.

The cinema's first woman director was Alice Guy Blaché, born on the outskirts of Paris on July 1, 1875, who entered the film industry as a secretary to Leon Gaumont in 1896. That same year she wrote, photographed and directed the short *La Fee aux choux* (*The Cabbage Fairy*). Gaumont was pleased with the film and appointed Alice Guy a full-time director; all Gaumont productions from 1897 through 1905 were directed by her, and during 1906 and early 1907 she directed more than 100 sound-on-disc shorts.

In 1907 with her husband, English-born Herbert Blaché, also a director, she came to the States, where she was to direct steadily until 1920. She died in New Jersey on March 24, 1968. None of Madame Blaché's features has survived, but in the A.F.I. Collection at the Library of Congress are some six shorts which she produced for the Solax Company during 1912 and 1913, among which is the film being screened in Chicago, *A House Divided*, released on May 2, 1913.

The majority of early women directors were under contract to Universal, promoted by that company from the ranks of its editors, screenwriters and actresses. One such director was

Cleo Madison, who began her screen career as an actress with Universal. By 1916 she was directing and starring in her own productions. However, her career as both a star and a director was all too brief; by the early twenties she was playing supporting roles in "B" pictures. She died in California on March 11, 1964.

The film we are screening, *Her Defiance*, released on January 14, 1916, is a typical Cleo Madison two-reeler. It is nothing very special, but as a reviewer in *The Moving Picture World* noted, it "is sincerely presented."

Lois Weber was another Universal contract director; she was also the most important of early women directors. In 1917 she was hailed as the "greatest woman director in the world."

Like Cleo Madison, Weber began her career as an actress around 1908. She began directing in 1913, usually in close collaboration with her husband, Phillips Smalley. Her career as a director lasted until 1934; she died in Hollywood on November 13, 1939.

Several Lois Weber productions have been preserved in the A.F.I. Collection at the Library of Congress, including *Where Are My Children* (1916), *Too Wise Wives* (1921) and the feature being screened here, *The Blot*. *The Blot*, which features a Lois Weber discovery, Claire Windsor, was released on September 4, 1921, and deals with a topic seldom, if ever, discussed, that of "genteel" poverty and the stubborn pride which keeps a certain class of person starving rather than accept charity. To her subject Lois Weber brings a rare feeling and a fine attention to detail.

*Anthony Slide*

*Anthony Slide is assistant archivist at the American Film Institute in Washington, D. C.*



Alice Guy Blaché

# Features and Directors

## Dorothy Arzner

Dorothy Arzner was born in 1900 in California. Because her father, Louis Arzner, owned a famous Hollywood restaurant next to a theatre, she grew up familiar with both actors and their dramatic repertoire. She watched on the stage such dramatic personages as Maude Adams, Sarah Bernhardt, and David Warfield. She knew from the restaurant such movie immortals as D. W. Griffith, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mack Sennett.

Arzner attended the University of Southern California with plans to become a surgeon. But after a restless summer's employment in a doctor's office she abandoned these career aspirations. "I wanted to be like Jesus—'Heal the sick and raise the dead,' instantly, without surgery or pills," she recalls. "Even though I was an A student and had a fairly extensive education—I had taken courses in history of art and architecture—I became a so-called dropout."

The time was the end of World War I, and Arzner sought an occupation which might bring financial independence from her father. She looked to the film industry. A serious flu epidemic had created temporary openings, so Arzner found herself standing before William De Mille of Famous Players-Lasky Studio, soon to be Paramount Pictures. "I think I'd like a job in the movies," she said.

For a week Dorothy Arzner walked through the studio, watching filmmaking first hand. "I remember making the observation, 'If one was going to be in the movie business, one should be a director.' He was the one who told everyone what to do. In fact he was the whole works." But De Mille's secretary told the youthful Arzner that typing scripts would be her "best" experience. The script was the "blueprint" of the picture, Arzner was told.

William De Mille tested Arzner, asking where she wanted to start. "At the bottom," she answered, "typing scripts." He was satisfied. "For that, I'll give you a job." She was placed in the typing department of Famous Players-Lasky at twelve dollars a week.

By the end of six months the industrious Arzner progressed from typing to holding scripts to the editing department. Here she displayed such amazing talent that she was assigned to Realart Studio, a Famous Players subsidiary, where she cut 52 pictures as chief editor and supervised the training of other editors and splicers.

Arzner was recalled to Famous Players and charged with editing the major production, *Blood and Sand*, starring Rudolf Valentino. "It was a big picture," she remembers, "Hundreds of thousands of feet of film." She cut down 23 reels to twelve for the release print. She then was requested by Paramount star director, James Cruze, and stayed with him through several spectacular pictures, *The Covered Wagon* and *Old Ironsides*. The latter film she both wrote and edited, a rare dual production credit.

James Cruze became Arzner's prime champion at Paramount, even insisting that his editor accompany him during the shooting of pictures. (Arzner remains touched by a tiny incident of friendship of almost half a century ago, when this director nursed her all night after she became deathly ill on *The Covered Wagon* set.) "Cruze was one of the finest, most generous persons I knew in the motion picture business. He had no prejudices. He valued my ability and told people I was his right arm."

The Paramount management was not nearly so appreciative. Even after her years of dedicated studio service Arzner found her ambition to direct met with coldly in

the upper ranks. "Dorothy, you go into our scenario department and later we'll think about directing," they told her. It was only when she threatened to embark for directing at Columbia Studio that Jesse Lasky handed her a French farce, *The Best Dressed Woman in Paris*, to rewrite for her Paramount directing debut. The newspapers announced, "Lasky Names Woman Director," and Dorothy Arzner started on the farce, renamed *Fashions for Women*. It was 1927, and she was 27 years old.

"I had not directed anything before. In fact I hadn't told anyone to do anything before," is Arzner's slightly exaggerated recollection of her first days on the *Fashions For Women* set. Her star was Broadway actress Esther Ralston—"Tall, blonde, a showgirl type. Very beautiful"—and their collaboration was so successful that Arzner was promoted to movies with Paramount's top box office star, Clara Bow.

"Clara was a redheaded gamin, full of life and vitality, with the heart of a child," says Arzner. Their most celebrated movie, *The Wild Party*, in 1929, not only was Paramount's first all-talking picture but introduced Frederic March to the screen. Arzner brought March from the stage to Hollywood and liked his acting so much that she cast him in four of her movies in all. (She also transferred Ruth Chatterton and Ginger Rogers from the theatre; they were two other of her film "discoveries.")

Dorothy Arzner was a prolific Paramount director between 1927 and 1932. Perhaps her most financially successful movie was *Sarah And Son*, a 1930 weepie with Ruth Chatterton, which broke box office records at New York's Paramount Theatre. Among her most innovative works were *Honor Among Lovers* in 1931, in which Julia, a married woman, ends the picture on an ocean voyage with a man different from her priggish husband; and *Merrily We Go To Hell*, a wise and witty sophisticated 1932 comedy with Frederic March and Sylvia Sydney.

By 1932 Paramount had changed, and not to Arzner's satisfaction. The new executives were so fearful of *Merrily We Go To Hell* that they almost didn't release it. And *Working Girls*, an extremely personal little semi-experimental narrative written by Arzner's choice collaborator, Zoe Akins, was treated so shabbily by the Paramount upper echelons that it got hardly any play at all: no New

Dorothy Arzner



York opening and, even more strangely, not even a press book came out of Paramount for *Working Girls*.

Arzner was finished at Paramount. She left in 1932 to freelance, beginning with *Christopher Strong* at RKO. Arzner brought Zoe Akins to write the screenplay. It was from a Gilbert Frankau novel based on the life of aviatrix Amy Lowell, who had made an around-the-world flight and broke altitude records.

Ann Harding, who was scheduled to play the aviatrix, Cynthia Darrington, was forced out of the movie because of contract difficulties. Arzner searched RKO and came up with young Katharine Hepburn, rescued from a ridiculous role in a Tarzan-type picture. "I went over to the set," explains Arzner, "and she was up a tree with a leopard skin on! She had a marvelous figure; and talking to her, I felt she was just the very modern type I wanted for *Christopher Strong*."

Samuel Goldwyn loved *Christopher Strong*, so he signed Arzner to make Emile Zola's *Nana* in 1934 at Goldwyn Studio. Featured was his Russian discovery, Anna Sten, planned as competition for Dietrich and Garbo. Despite Gregg Toland's masterful photography, *Nana* was not completely satisfactory to Arzner. She wanted a much more important script than Goldwyn was willing to offer her.

In 1936 at RKO Arzner began work on *Mother Carey's Chickens*, a vehicle for Ginger Rogers. But both director and actress found the project trivial and abandoned it. Arzner sent her agent to talk to Columbia Picture's notorious Harry Cohn, who had been seeking her talents since 1927. Arzner now agreed to a contract, but with special clauses: she was granted producer's status; she was exempted from the infamous story conferences aboard Cohn's yacht.

She became interested in bringing a faithful version of George Kelly's Pulitzer play, *Craig's Wife*, to the screen and decided to direct it



Dance, Girl, Dance



herself, handing over the producing to Edward Chodorov. Further, she went out on a limb in casting, reaching for a "second banana" MGM contract comedienne, Rosalind Russell, and offering her the lead dramatic role of Harriet Craig. Russell was hesitant, but Arzner pledged that she would quit the motion picture business if Russell was not a success. Rosalind Russell signed to play Harriet Craig—and soon met stardom in *His Girl Friday* and *The Women*.

Harry Cohn was upset that Arzner had decided without his O.K. on such an unknown box office quantity for her lead, so he countered by taking personal control and ordering a *Craig's Wife* set, Columbia-fashion. But Arzner hired herself a designer, William Haines, and they sneaked into the studio at night and transformed the set according to Arzner's wishes into the appearance of a modern Greek tragedy.

Cohn almost fired Arzner, but his decision to hold tight proved wise. *Craig's Wife* was a critic's favorite. And it was brought in by Arzner in forty days for \$280,000, giving Cohn an "A" picture for "B" financing. In the long run the movie returned a substantial profit to Columbia.

A happy Harry Cohn placed Dorothy Arzner back in his good graces. But Arzner was unimpressed by Cohn's change of heart and moved on, away from Columbia. "Why couldn't he have liked me so much earlier?" she recently asked.

Arzner was invited over to MGM by Irving Thalberg to develop a picture for Greta Garbo. But Thalberg died, and this exciting project was finished. She remained at MGM to make a film from Ferenc Molnár's unpublished play, *The Girl From Trieste*, about a prostitute, "a victim of economic exploitation" (to quote Arzner). It was to star Luise Rainer. Yet one day Rainer was removed from the story, and *The Girl From Trieste* was rewritten for Joan Crawford as the lighter, frothier *The Bride Wore Red*. Arzner directed but never felt comfortable in the mammoth, synthetic MGM factory.

Arzner's contributions to World War II were a series of short films made for the WACS featuring Samuel Goldwyn's stock company, including some of the *Nana* actors. There were demonstration films for WAC training—*How to Groom Oneself*, etc. She was offered a military appointment as major but

turned it down. "I never wanted to be in the army," she said.

Back in Hollywood the 1940 production of *Dance, Girl, Dance* was in trouble. A week into the shooting, no one—cast, writers, or even director—understood this quirky little property about ballet dancers and burlesque houses or knew what to do with it. Producer Eric Pommer made a desperate decision, yet one which time would vindicate. He fired the confused director of *Dance, Girl, Dance* and brought in Dorothy Arzner to salvage the project.

Arzner perused the rushes, studied the actresses in the leads—Lucille Ball and Maureen O'Hara—then transformed the troubled script into a new dynamic work built around a dialectic clash of the contrasting identities of her two actresses. "I decided the theme should be The Art Spirit, Maureen, versus the Commercial Go-Getter, Lucy Ball. That seemed to clear the air." The rest is history! *Dance, Girl, Dance* is Dorothy Arzner's most famous, acclaimed film.

She returned to Columbia for *First Comes Courage*, a movie about the Norwegian underground from Elliott Arnold's novel *The Commandos*. There was no second until work on *First Comes Courage* (nor on any movie which Arzner can remember, except a bit in *Sarah and Son*). Arzner directed all the outdoor photography, the army maneuvers, the scene inside a submarine, even the frightening first fight which occurs between a terrified horse and a pitchfork stuck in the hay (Arzner still shudders remembering the danger in shooting). The last scenes of the movie were shot by another director when Arzner contracted pneumonia while on location in the Northern California mountains. In this section she is dissatisfied by a speeded-up chase scene at the conclusion which is inconsistent with her own work on the film.

Arzner was sick with pneumonia for over a year and almost died at one point. She decided at that time that she had "had it" with movies and left Hollywood forever in 1943.

Among Arzner's projects in the ensuing years: (1) She produced three plays at the Pasadena Playhouse, all written by her favorite screenwriter, Zoe Akins, and all starring vehicles for her close friend, Billie Burke. (2) She initiated a filmmaking course at the same Playhouse. There were no funds, so instruction was limited to a single camera and tape recorder. (3) She made over fifty Pepsi-Cola

commercials for another friend, Joan Crawford.

(4) A few years back Arzner was invited to be a guest lecturer in filmmaking at UCLA; it was a one-semester appointment which stretched into four years. She ran these classes professionally (the second time a student was late he or she would be out of the course). Yet she allowed her students freedom to make any kind of movie they wished as long as they could explain what they were attempting and didn't resort to nudity. "The boys were a bunch of peeping toms," she explains with a smile.

Her most solid achievement at UCLA was her discovery and total support for an eccentric film student named Frances Ford Coppola. When the other faculty hedged at allowing Coppola to enter an elaborate film project, Arzner proclaimed, "It won't hurt you to let him try, I assure you. Some day you will be proud of this boy." (Coppola readily acknowledges Arzner's help whenever he is interviewed.)

In 1974 Arzner has left both teaching and filmmaking behind with few regrets. She attends an occasional old movie at the College of the Desert near her Southern California home. But her most important concern is the historical novel of the settling of Los Angeles which she is writing with the typical seriousness and commitment and total energy which have marked her whole professional and artistic life.

Dorothy Arzner is not only a fine cinema entertainer. She is also an astonishing feminist. Women are at the very center of every Arzner film (fourteen heroines in the fourteen films she made in Hollywood from 1927 to 1943). Arzner examines their situation within the milieu of female culture, a context rarely visible in American movies. And she gets at the subtleties of what divides women, and better, what unites them. And if the ideal Arzner heroine is gutsy, assertive, and intelligent, there are many of her women who challenge that image of perfection. From the male-chasing Stella in *Wild Party* to the male-teasing Bubbles, *Dance, Girl, Dance*'s vibrant stripper, Arzner's films concern women at all levels of awareness.

Arzner goes beyond the undeniably exciting portrayals of the most obviously heroic of females (aviatrix, spies) to a genuine empathy with the "womanly women" who also populate her movies—the repressed, conservative females

who live in the shadows of the world. Arzner tells their stories with compassion and sensitivity, showing the greatest respect for even her failed heroines—the women who, in reaching for maturity or career, are sidetracked in love, destroyed by their passivity and inhibitions.

But most significant for a feminist audience, Arzner's films are about women as decision-makers. And the choices which govern their lives are bold, leaving them beyond the bounds of traditional societal morality and therefore isolated.

In film after film Dorothy Arzner concerns herself with female protagonists who make decisions—brave, eccentric, or foolish—whose consequences are to isolate the women and disrupt the comforts and touchstones of their lives—friends, family, lovers, occupation. In her comedies the isolation is a painful but necessary step on the way toward a deeper, more mature happiness—a reuniting of heroine with the world at the end. In her tragic melodramas the isolation is irreversible—one the heroine has stepped away from the world, there is no coming back, only eternal solitude.

What is the goal for the ideal Arzner heroine? She is gambling everything for autonomy, a free existence, control over love, freedom, career. But the heroine can only achieve her precious goals through an elaborate initiation process. She must voluntarily travel into a sometimes nightmare world of isolation and solitude, hoping to make her mark and reach the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel." If she fails, as in the melodramas, she is trapped forever by her own actions in this nightmarish existence. If she succeeds, she reclaims her position in the real world on more solid, mature terms than ever before.

## THE COMEDIES

In Arzner's early comedy *The Wild Party* (1929). Clara Bow plays Stella, the "wild party girl," in

constant revolt against the authoritarian women's college she attends. Stella parties all night, never studies, and her flamboyant behavior alienates her from the more staid elements of the campus community. Arzner increasingly isolates her heroine. Initially Stella is placed outside the rigid academic community, and later, as she attempts to become a more serious student, she is separated from her wild party friends as well.

When her best friend is accused of violating school policy, Stella valiantly takes the blame, a remarkable act of loyalty which ends in her own expulsion and finalizes her exclusion from the school society. Fortunately, the man she loves, an anthropology professor, quits the college and follows her.

Stella's rebellious response to the repressive school is deemed natural by Arzner. The director's position is posited through the professor, who considers the school's suffocating atmosphere inappropriate for a truly creative educational experience. But Stella is at times irresponsible in her modes of rebellion. She must become serious about her life before she can earn love and win freedom. She must, in a sense, transcend the simple wanting of romance before love can be achieved. Ultimately she is rewarded for her courageous act of loyalty (her most serious and honorable action in the film), winning love and a chance at "real learning" in the anthropologist's field.

Released in 1940 through RKO, *Dance, Girl, Dance* proves to be the most complex of Arzner's comedies. Maureen O'Hara plays Judy O'Brien, a Cinderella-like stooge ballerina to Lucille Ball's lusty burlesque-queen Tiger Lily White—also known as Bubbles.

Arzner tells a splendid story of the dance partners' sometimes sympathetic but often jealous relationship, as stripper and stooge fight over love and careers. But at last the women learn that they have no battle at all; their feuds simply are childish rivalry, resolved in adult friendship at *Dance, Girl, Dance's* finish line. Predictably, Arzner loves both her heroines—the hustling, tawdry burlesque star and the shy, ethereal ballerina, and both women are rewarded at the film's end. Bubbles gets stinky rich, soaking up fifty grand in an alimony settlement, while Judy wins a career as modern ballerina and possible love in the



arms of the dance company's director (significantly, this is a man who respects Judy professionally. For Arzner, the only enduring relationships are those of equals.) But before the happy ending, before she is ready to dance, Judy must grow up.

For most important, *Dance, Girl, Dance* is the story of how the child-like ballerina, Judy O'Brien, matures, learning to sacrifice love and inhibition in grabbing a dearly desired career as ballet dancer. From the earliest scenes in the film Arzner pictures her heroine as special — talented, hard-working — while the other women are frivolous, just passing time, and it is this difference which isolates her. She is "the last star shining after all the others have quit." She is separate from the others in Madame Basilova's dance troupe, the only one serious about her work, practicing long hours into the night while the other women sleep, her shadow the only movement in the darkened room. Judy is a dreamer, free in the solitude of her dance fantasy, but ultimately trapped by her lack of confidence and fears of failure. When offered a professional opportunity she retreats, fleeing a major dance company audition without even trying.

To teach Judy not to run away from hardship and not to deny the seamier side of life, Arzner places her ballerina-heroine in the most unlikely of places — a burlesque hall. It is a hideously alienating atmosphere — Judy dancing

nightly before the leering, jeering audience in the smoke-filled auditorium — a most inappropriate environment for an "art-spirit" ballerina. At first Judy wants to run away, but she sticks to it. And her decision proves essential. This is the necessary period of apprenticeship — gaining guts through her encounters, experiencing and losing love, suffering the humiliation of dancing classic ballet before a stripper's audience. Yet nightly she gains confidence and strength until at last she is ready to confront her tormentors: "Go ahead and stare . . . go ahead and get your fifty cents worth . . . I'm not ashamed."

In Arzner's view, art must confront life before passing beyond it. Judy comes out of her isolation and qualified at last to become a member of the modern ballet company — the profound mediator between vapid idealism — her classical ballet — and crass materialism — the burlesque house. Judy is ready to dance.

## THE MELODRAMAS

In *Christopher Strong* Katharine Hepburn plays world-renowned aviatrix Cynthia Darrington, who abandons friends and career in choosing romantic involvement with the married Christopher Strong. The couple meet on the sly, hiding in secluded restaurant corners, unable now to enjoy the easy comforts of visibility and friendship. Cynthia grows increasingly restless. She is lonely

when neglected by Strong and misses her work and professional comrades. She longs to break world records once again, to feel grease in her hands and hair. Her alienation is expressed through her clothes, as she changes from her natural garb — flyer's gear of overalls and boots — into uncomfortable lady's city attire, dark suits and high heels.

Cynthia's situation becomes acute when she discovers she's pregnant. Strong would marry her as duty demands (the same reason he stays with his wife), but Cynthia wants the ecstasy of love — not boredom, deceit, and respectable marriage. Realizing the impossibility of her situation, Cynthia chooses to fly again. And, while breaking the world's altitude record, in a moment of frenzy she pulls off her oxygen mask and is killed.

Arzner uses Cynthia's solo air flight to demonstrate most completely her heroine's isolation. Cynthia flies alone without even an engineer to assist her. The cockpit is a tight, compressed environment, the claustrophobic atmosphere is heightened by the constant whirring of the engine's motor. The camera closes in on Cynthia as she watches the altimeter rising, rising to break the altitude record. But Cynthia doesn't see the numbers on the dial. She sees instead the faces of Strong, his wife and daughter, her mind clicking through the events of the affair she now knows must end. Cynthia, crying and hysterical, understands that society can no more accept an unwed mother than it can tolerate a "homewrecker." She pulls off her oxygen mask. Although she fumbles to replace it, her movements are too late, and she passes out as her plane plummets to the ground.

In telling Cynthia's story, the story of a woman whose decision for love isolates her and ultimately leads to her death, Arzner also relates the story of Lady Strong, whose intense love for her wastrel husband, Christopher, ends in a sort of psychic death. Christopher has left his wife alone much of the time, her only companions her two hunting dogs. She has neither the love nor respect of her husband or daughter — for both have found more sophisticated companionship in Cynthia. In essence, this single Arzner film carries double impact: it is the story of two women who, in choosing love, are left utterly alone and destroyed.





*First Comes Courage* was the last feature film directed by Dorothy Arzner. Belatedly released in 1943, a year after its completion at Columbia, Arzner's picture was fairly ignored by critics at its earliest screenings. Yet this astonishing war film proves to be a quintessential Arzner picture, a compilation of her deepest concerns in nearly twenty years of Hollywood filmmaking.

*First Comes Courage* is a searing tale of war's brutalizing force, a sophisticated anti-war picture which, however, affirms throughout a nation's need to fight violently for liberation. And it is the drama of Norwegian spy, Nicole Larsen, caught between love and war, who ultimately embraces political responsibility. This decision thrusts the heroine deeper and deeper into isolation from an entire community from friends and loved ones.

Arzner's war in *First Comes Courage* is a grim happening. Here violence occurs in an horrific instant of life-shattering destruction: a quick montage, and a bayonet pierces straight through its victim's stomach, or a Norwegian patriot strangles his treacherous cousin, head buried beneath a pile of hay, only seconds after their toast to the "brotherhood."

The only response to repression in Arzner's world is to fight, and "once you decide to fight, any assignment is easy." Sentimentality, indeed concern for one's own life, is held in reserve, irrelevant till the war's end. A woman doctor, wavering only an instant at threats against her family, coolly condemns herself to death in not naming her compatriots in the underground. War is pervasive, invading even a child's play. The first startling scene of the movie: a sunny day turned black with horror. Arzner's camera follows a girl's handball from her fingers to the sky and finally into the street where it is kicked along further by marching Nazi soldiers.

The environment is unsettling, an entire nation now controlled by alien forces. The enemies Arzner portrays do not merely kill and maim, but, most malevolent, they alienate their victims from the tightest communal bonds, grabbing away even the music of Edvard Grieg, Norwegian nationalist composer of *Peer Gynt*, the suite repeated throughout the film. Only the Germans leisurely linger over meals and sing national folksongs.

Norwegian life is stripped of all such basic pleasures. Nazi soldiers enter a cafe, music stops, the dance floor empties, the meal disrupted; all this underlines Nicole's assertion, "People don't dance and laugh and ski. It's not that kind of world anymore." Involvement in the liberation struggle is the only choice for a "good Norwegian."

Arzner relates this story of emotional alienation by focusing on agent Larsen, an outcast from both the German and Norwegian communities. Nicole's assignment is to romance the German commander while wresting vital espionage secrets from him. But the commandant grows increasingly suspicious of Nicole, while the Norwegians, ignorant that she is a spy, believe her affair is an act of German collaboration. Nicole, a typical Arzner heroine, is alone and friendless: distrusted by the Germans, ostracized by the Norwegians.

Nicole functions outside all structured society (except the underground, and there, for security purposes, the contact is minimal). She exists without the comforts of friendship, for no Norwegian will speak to her except to hiss, "Traitor!" Yet, even as she must abandon her British lover — a final act of dramatic self-sacrifice to the resistance movement — Nicole does not consider her imposed seclusion inordinate self-denial. Any "good Norwegian" would act similarly. And as she explains, "... any child would do the same. Today in Norway personal life doesn't exist. It is to be thrown away if it will help."

Despite her lover's suggestion that she escape to England with him, Nicole is determined to remain in Norway and continue her espionage (He: "You've already done as much as any woman could." She: "I'll quit when you do.")

Moments before they are to leave for Britain, Nicole manages to flee her lover's embrace, passing up forever her chance to escape the nightmare of Norway: the horror of Nazi repression and the cold loneliness of the spy's existence.

Nicole is the most triumphant heroine of Arzner's melodramas. She is noble, courageous: consciously willing the events of her life — no matter how bleak the consequences. Other Arzner heroines are learning — about love, loneliness, courage. But Nicole, the most evolved of Arzner's female protagonists, is the wise heroine. She is already experienced, responsible. Unlike Stella, Judy, and Cynthia Darrington, Nicole is not going through an initiation process. She is solid. She travels through Arzner's tunnel and comes out victorious, only to return and burrow her way through again. And given the choice between love and professional honor, Nicole, the perfect Arzner heroine, will choose honor again and again.

Dorothy Arzner's films are being hailed at women's film festivals around the world. And she deserves the feminist applause, for she has documented the lives of all women in the complex struggle for career, independence, integrity, and love.

**Karyn Kaye and Gerald Peary**

*Karyn Kaye is a graduate student in film at Northwestern University. She has published articles on film in Velvet Light Trap and will be associate editor of a new film journal coming out of Northwestern.*

*Gerald Peary is an instructor of film at Livingston College in New Jersey and will receive his Ph. D. from the University of Wisconsin, where he wrote on early gangster films. He is an associate editor of Film Heritage and a regular contributor to the Velvet Light Trap.*

## Antonia: A Portrait of a Woman (1974), Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow

**Distributor:**  
**Rocky Mountain Productions**

Documentary filmmakers have been painfully sensitive to two frequent accusations: lack of editorial objectivity and exploitation of the subject. In cases where those two principles might conflict—well, the filmmaker is doubly damned. On one occasion, under attack for the presumed exploitation of a subject, a harried filmmaker was heard to announce that the one way to settle the issue was for people to make films only about subjects they love. *Antonia* is such a film. Few films are made with such a generous outpouring of love. Whether the aim of the documentary form is to convey information about specific social issues or to convey the spirit of a specific person, *Antonia* is a success. The filmmakers not only introduce us to a real woman, but they also allow us the pleasure of learning to know and love her. That the love is so obvious throughout this film is all the more remarkable upon considering that *Antonia* carries a message of angry frustration from a woman who, despite recognized brilliance, was prevented by sex bias from working in the field of her talent. The harmony between co-directors and subject has created a work which is at once a beautiful human document and a powerful feminist tract.

*Antonia* Brico holds the dubious honor of being history's first woman conductor—dubious, because her historical position doomed her artistic birthright. In 1930, at the age of 28, she conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, the finest orchestra of its time and never, ever, conducted by a woman. The critics and orchestra members came to jeer and stayed to cheer. The force of her talent alone was able to overturn the staunchest preconceptions and prejudices, sweeping her through a triumphant European tour. It seemed as though all the gates would open to her; the battle had been won. Yet the praise was always stained with a foreboding sensationalism. The newspaper clippings that frame the film, charting her career, reveal how brutally she was treated. "Girl Genius" and "Musical Cinderella" were favorite media epithets.

Destined to be a maestra, Antonia was forced instead to become an oddity.

The extremes of cajoling and scheming to which Antonia Brico had to resort in order to gain even this token recognition are vividly reported. One unspeakable instance of chauvinism is captured by a still photograph of John Charles Thomas. "Can a woman really conduct?" was a regular newspaper theme. And society's answer, thinly disguised by the lip service owed to her artistry, was a resounding No; Antonia found herself in the hideous position of being a conductor without an orchestra, a musician denied her instrument. Determined to prove her contention that "art is sexless" and bent on practicing her art at any cost, she organized the first all-woman symphony orchestra. Still, the disbelief in woman's competency dogged her, most flamboyantly in the case of the winning tympanist. The gala male-vs.-female tympanist competition, a fantasy event, is meticulously chronicled in the film's very funny animation sequence. The fact that this battle of the sexes never really took place in no way diminishes its authenticity.

Antonia Brico has told her story many times throughout her life, and now, at age 73, she knows exactly what anecdotes she wants to tell and what tragedies she'd prefer to forget. She worked her way through college playing string quartets in San Francisco restaurants and doing sheet-music demonstrations in Woolworth's music departments, where customers often returned their music because the arrangements didn't measure up to Antonia's in-store improvisations. Throughout the struggle that became her career Antonia met and found help from some of the greatest men of our time: Albert Schweitzer, whom she visited five times in Africa; Jean Sibelius, whose music she conducted in his presence; Arthur Rubinstein, who tried to secure her an orchestra.

She finally moved to Denver on the promise of a position with their new symphony, but once again politics frustrated her ambitions. The futile struggle had become intolerable. She stayed in Denver, organized a non-profit, semi-professional community orchestra so she could conduct at least occasionally, and began giving piano lessons to aspiring young girls, who were full of the hopes she herself had once had. Judy Collins was her student for six years; she still feels Brico's

Antonia



influence.

An extraordinarily warm and loving woman, Antonia is projected into our consciousness by the film with a seemingly effortless grace. She tells her life in stories, with a humor that belies the pain they so consistently relate. Only once, when Judy prods her into anger, does she momentarily break with her good-natured image and explode against the injustices of her life and the misfortunes of her womanhood. With impeccable respect the filmmakers have selected those moments when Antonia is her strongest in stating her vulnerability.

Surely the labor of love has left its mark on this film, but it is important to emphasize the skill that supports its effort. The film's editing is truly masterful: *Antonia* uses portrait pieces that so often spell anathema to the viewer (stills, newspaper clippings, historical footage) and juxtaposes them provocatively, with such a meaningful rhythm that we never question their importance. The film is suffused with Antonia Brico's music and personality. It is a sign of great strength that the film preserves them intact and fashions itself in their image so perfectly that Antonia and the film seem one. The atmosphere of trust between Judy Collins and Antonia must have made that possible. The camera work makes that apparent. Judy Collins, famous as a singer of folk and popular music, originally conceived the film as a magazine article, then an 8mm film, and finally the 16mm documentary it became. She sought out Jill Godmilow, who had been working in film as an editor since 1967 editing documentaries, TV commercials, and even feature films (*Gerstein's Tales*), but who never before directed. To see the film is to acknowledge the power and significance of this first collaboration.

Antonia, so sincere in its message and so honest in its affection, should become the

classic documentary of the women's movement. It will certainly silence any critics who may still cling to the notion of the movement as the sour grapes of the underserving. Hopefully, too, it may be helpful to Antonia herself. As orchestras have begun to feel the burden of their superstar conductor system, with home orchestras suffering leadership crises as their stars globetrot, many are trying to reverse the trend by hiring conductors willing to stay home and conduct. Perhaps this development will help Antonia, at last, get the chance to conduct again. And perhaps this film, if seen by enough people, will benefit her career as well. Antonia Brico has never considered herself a feminist; she didn't march with the suffragists or involve herself in campaign politics. Her enormous spiritual strength carried her through 43 years of aspiring to become what she already was: a woman conductor. Indeed, she admitted to the filmmakers that she would gladly have traded "that odious distinction" of being a pioneer for having been able to conduct. Her story speaks for her.

*Camille J. Cook  
and B. Ruby Rich*

*Antonia: A Portrait of a Woman* (U.S.A., 58 min.) was co-directed by Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow, photographed by Coulter Watt, edited by Jill Godmilow, and produced by Judy Collins for Rocky Mountain Productions (1775 Broadway, Suite 2418, N.Y. 10019).

*Does Chicago need another Polish promoter of film? Was it six years as chairperson of the Magic Lantern Society or the fact that she was marked from birth by being named for Garbo that destined Camille Jarzemska Cook for the role of director of the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago?*

*Ruby Rich appeared in Boston in 1948 under a pseudonym. She arrived in Chicago in 1973, became assistant director of the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and even a member of the Steering Committee for FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74.*

## Attica (1973), Cinda Firestone

**Distributor: Tri-Continental Films**

Cinda Firestone's celebrated documentary film *Attica* is about a recent American revolution, one which took place during September, 1971, in Attica State Prison in upstate New York. The event began as the inmates' peaceful demonstration both against the prison's subhuman living conditions and for basic democratic rights such as decent medical care, accommodations, education and food; it ended in the slaughter of 43 prisoners and hostages by state troopers acting under Governor Nelson Rockefeller's orders. Never before or since did any branch of the American government use as great a concentration of weapons against the people. There were more deaths in the Attica massacre than in any other solely domestic American conflict since the Civil War. Although these facts are public knowledge now and the ensuing McKay Commission hearings concluded that the government was guilty of malfeasance and duplicity, not one indictment was brought against troopers or other authorities. As for the prisoners, 61 have been indicted.

*Attica* was released in the United States in March, 1974. Its premiere took place in October, 1973 at the Mannheim (Germany) Film Festival, where it was the only unanimous choice for a Golden Ducat. In November, 1973 *Attica* was invited to the Nyon (Switzerland) International Film Festival, where it received the Grand Prize for documentary films from the Jury des Jeunes. *Attica* was invited to exhibit at the Festival Dei Popoli (Italy), a non-competitive international film festival, in December, 1973.

That *Attica* received these honors isn't surprising. Firestone brilliantly directed and edited a wide variety of footage for use in *Attica*, including filmed interviews (with guards, official observers, survivors and ex-inmates), stills, newsreel films. With the prisoners' permission two Black camera-people, Roland Barnes and Jay Lamarch, filmed the activities in yard "D," which the rebels claimed and established as a liberated zone. Narrated in the film by surviving inmates, the state troopers' assault on the inmates

was filmed by troopers themselves through the scopes of their rifles. Because of Firestone's artistry even the stills seem dramatic: *The interview (with inmate Frank Smith) takes place in Erie County jail where the indicted (Attica) brothers are currently being held. Motion picture cameras are not allowed, but Firestone so adroitly weaves her stills with the voice of the brother, that his careful words take on even more classic proportions. We can study the poetry of his face and his expressive hands as we ponder his words. The same technique is used in an interview with Jerry Rosenberg, the jailhouse lawyer, and this section is the artistic high-point of the film* (Sharon Krebs, "Attica: Images of a Dream Deferred," *University Review*).

Director, producer and editor of *Attica*, Cinda Firestone has been a member of the Liberation News Service collective, has taught filmmaking to students in East Harlem and Newark, and has worked for Emile de Antonio Films in New York City. Currently she is traveling around the country filming all aspects of American life in preparation for a long documentary about the U.S.A.

Firestone's comments about her personal response to the events at Attica Prison convey the compassion and sense of justice which inform her film:

*I would like this film to make people wonder about the whole institution of prisons and, taking that a step further, wonder about a society that can create things like Attica.*

*When I interviewed (inmate) Chris Reed, he told me how first they shot his leg off, and then this State Trooper came and kicked him in the leg that was just shot off. That some people can be this horrible is just terrifying to me. The sadism that the prisoners went through after the takeover (of the prison by the troopers)—it's just really depressing that people can be like that. . . . But then I talked to these men who had just gone thru all of this and instead of just becoming really bitter, they resolved to do something about it—change themselves and try and change things when they got out. These men had been shut up in cells for months and months on end under intolerable conditions, and then had to go through all that, and they still came out of it philosophical and determined to do something instead of being beaten down by it—it was very important to me to*

Attica



*know there were people like this. I just don't think people realize how brutal State Troopers and police can be to someone who's in a completely helpless position. I don't just mean cracking people's heads open, but, like in Attica, shooting people that were lying on the ground, and taking everything they had—wristwatches, eye glasses, even their false teeth—and smashing them and throwing them into ditches. Just this incredible brutality that I don't think the press and TV really brought out, so that people didn't realize what really happened there. Something like Attica could never have happened had there not been incredible callousness, cruelty and insensitivity from the bottom all the way to the top. From the bottom where men were willing to carry twelve-gauge shotguns with dum-dum bullets (which expand in the victims' bodies and were outlawed by the Geneva Convention) and shoot them at people with no weapons, to the Governor's office where they allowed this all to happen (as quoted in the press book).*

*Attica* is not only an intelligent film but also an impassioned one. Its devotion to the prisoners' cause gives the film its vitality and its justice: *Attica* unflinchingly places the blame exactly where it belongs, on the authorities and the system they violently enforce, rather than posing as "objective" and really condoning the officials' crimes by evading or obscuring the crucial events and issues. *Attica*, which Vincent Canby called "a superior example of committed filmmaking" (*New York Times*) and Penelope Giliatt called "a trumpet call of a film" (*New Yorker*), is an excellent example of the cinema's power to present a historic event to those of us who didn't witness it in such a vivid and moving way that we come to feel a sense of kinship with the people who did participate in the event and thus begin to develop a

sense of responsibility to them and their struggle. Our experience with Firestone's film can be a large first step toward our own political involvement in that struggle.

Seeing *Attica* is a stirring and in some ways shattering experience. Ellen Cantarow commented about fiction—but the remark holds for film as well—that "bourgeois literature . . . celebrates individual exploits, individual sensibilities" ("Why Teach Literature?", *The Politics of Literature*). Firestone's *Attica* is the rare film (or story, novel or play, for that matter) which, by sensitively recording the resistance and inevitable repression of that liberation struggle in Attica State Prison, celebrates collective action, collective sensibility.

In a way, the honest, explicit footage of life in yard "D" after it was liberated to become a tiny, short-lived, truly democratic community is the source of the film's impact. *Attica* deserves recognition for its faithful presentation of life in yard "D" if for nothing else: most films (of all kinds) virtually deny the possibility of a truly democratic society by failing ever to depict one and so failing to allow their audiences to imagine one. In our society the range of behavior and emotional expression among people, especially among men, is severely limited, but in yard "D" we see Black, white and Puerto Rican men sharing the work and the decision-making equally and living together with mutual respect and affection. It's a shock to realize that "the best of humanity rest(s) with the 'rebels' and that all this is repellent to any pretense of decency and justice (is) on the side of 'law and order'" (Irwin Silber, *Guardian*), for our culture tells us that the rebels are "criminals," supposedly the most dangerous people in society and those least capable of living peacefully and productively among the rest of us.

The men who created the

community in yard "D" for those four days in '71 actually experienced what too few Americans ever experience—the joy and exhilaration of being engaged with other people in an effort toward collective self-determination and in a collective revolutionary movement. It is the destruction of this community which is so painful to see in the film. I found it nearly unbearable to watch the state troopers gun down the men whom, through the eloquence of Firestone's film, I had grown to love and admire as members of the total community.

Some of the shock and horror of the assault comes through, I think, in a juxtaposition of some inmates' reminiscences of the incident with a remark by Vincent Mancusi, warden of the Prison. Ex-inmate Harold Walker says: *And then they had a P.A. system saying, "Place your hands on your heads" and "surrender to the nearest officer and you won't be harmed" and they kept shooting people when they said that. They said it and then they shot people.* And inmate Chris Reed: *I heard a guy holler out, "Please don't kill me, don't kill me, don't kill me"; and the (other) guy told him to shut up and the guy just kept repeating it and the other guy said, "I said shut up" and the guy kept saying it and a shot rang out and I didn't hear this guy no more.*

Later in '71 the Pepper Commission, which investigated prison conditions in general, asked the warden, "Could you tell us if you have adopted any new program as a result of all this, or intensified any old program designed to reduce the possibility of reoccurrence?" Mancusi's answer was, "We have instituted two gun posts."

People usually go to the movies to be entertained and pacified, not to be awakened to the plight of other people in their own time. Besides, we're accustomed to seeing violence and cruelty



presented coldly in newsreels, TV shows and commercial films and to remaining untouched ourselves. It's rare to feel as deeply moved by a film of any kind as we are by *Attica*. That her film can arouse our numbed capacity for compassion and keep alive in our minds the events of *Attica* and the social conditions which created them is proof of Firestone's excellence as a filmmaker. As a documentary film with a great emotional force, *Attica* is a phenomenon not of entertainment but of survival. *Attica* and films like it mark the beginning of the time when we will turn to art not to contemplate it or lose ourselves in it but to stimulate and unify our imaginations, our actions, our lives.

All proceeds from the first year of American screenings of *Attica* (through March, 1975) are being given to the Attica Legal Defense Fund to help defray the legal expenses of the ongoing trials.

Linda Greene

ATTICA—80 min., color. U.S.A. Directed, produced and edited by Cinda Firestone. Assistant director, editor: Tucker Ashworth. Cinematography: Roland Barnes, Jay Lamarch, Mary Lampson, Jesse Goodman, Carol Stein, Kevin Keating.

A doctoral candidate in English at the University of Chicago, Linda Greene is writing a dissertation on George Eliot and artistic problems in the representation of women in fiction. She has been interested in the women's movement for a long time, and her work on the film festival is her most recent major feminist activity since she co-convened a course in fiction by and about women at the Liberation School for Women in Chicago in 1971.

## The Blue Light (1932), Leni Riefenstahl

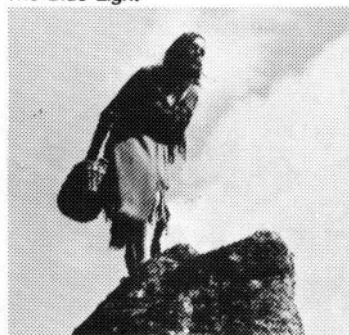
Distributor: Blackhawk Films

Leni Riefenstahl produced, directed and starred in her first film, *The Blue Light*, 1932. The film is based on an old legend of the Italian Dolomites. On nights when the moon is full, the peak of Mount Cristallo radiates a marvelous blue light that lures all the young villagers to it. Even though their parents try to keep them home behind closed window shutters, they are drawn away like somnambulists and fall to death among the rocks. Only Junta (Leni Riefenstahl), gypsy girl, is said to reach the light safely and is therefore considered a witch. The superstitious village people insult the girl and throw stones at her whenever she comes down from her cabin high in the mountains. A young Viennese painter staying for a day or so in the village witnesses such a scene and feels so attracted by Junta that he goes to live with her in her mountain refuge. One night she leaves him and climbs the moon-lit cliffs of Mount Cristallo. Secretly following her to the peak, the painter discovers that the mysterious blue light emanates from a stretch of precious crystals. He enlightens the villagers, who under his guidance remove the treasure, now turned from a source of fright to a promise of wealth. Next full moon, Junta, unsuspecting, resumes her ascent; but since the blue light is gone, she misses her way and falls down a precipice. The painter, too late to rescue her, bends over the shining face of the dead girl.

The legend was written into a screenplay by Leni Riefenstahl and Bela Balasz, and together they produced it with photographer Hans Schneeberger. It can be classified as a "mountain film," a genre unique to Germany much as "the western" is to American film. The hero or heroine is usually pitted against "the mountain," which becomes a symbol imbued with possible interpretations.

One review stated: "Leni Riefenstahl's *The Blue Light* was wonderful, mystical, and mythical, with Riefenstahl playing the young girl who is reviled and persecuted by the men of the village because she has powers and knowledge they don't have. Terrific scenes contrasting the men sitting together in groups in the village drinking or doing business and her wandering alone on the mountain side. The

The Blue Light



settings and lighting were magical." Another declared: "Magically photographed, with Riefenstahl as its wild and beautiful center, *The Blue Light* is filled with mystery and the quality of fable."

Leni Riefenstahl was born in Berlin in 1904. As a child she kept books for her father, an electrician. She attended the Berlin School of Crafts. Against her father's wishes she studied Russian Ballet and later took modern dancing at the Mary Wigman School in Dresden. Thereafter she danced in Max Reinhardt's Theater Company. In 1923-24 she danced and arranged dance programs in cities throughout the continent until an injury to her knee necessitated an operation.

During her convalescence she saw *The Mountain of Fate*, one of the alpine genre films, which had been sponsored by Dr. Arnold Franck, noted German producer, director and explorer. She sought him out at his villa and handed him a sheaf of newspaper reviews of her dances. All were favorable. Dr. Franck decided to grant her request for a movie role. She starred in several of his mountain films, doing even the most dangerous climbing herself and refusing to use a double.

In 1931 she formed her own production company, and in 1932 she produced, directed and starred in *The Blue Light*. From 1934 to 1938 she is known to have produced three films on behalf of the Third Reich. For these films she is both damned as a propagandist and praised as an artist. Hitler, charmed by her personal presence as well as her talent for producing artistic films, selected her for the job of producing a film of Nazi Germany.

In 1934 Riefenstahl filmed the events of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, transforming them into a stupendous, two-hour spectacle called *Triumph of the Will*. Enamored with the glamor and the art of filmmaking, Hitler willingly allowed himself to be directed

through long, arduous sessions of shooting under hot lights. Riefenstahl had a small army of technicians and cameramen at her disposal, and with the complete cooperation of Hitler and the convention's organizers she created one of the lasting documents of modern political history, a film mirroring every theatrical nuance of the Nazi Cult.

*Triumph of the Will* is as brutally effective in its own way as the Soviet propaganda classics. Unlike them, it does not seek to persuade but to impress. Powerful the film is with its massed crowds, its endless marching columns, its grimly gala panoply of banners and torches. However, there are few propagandizing analogies drawn by "intellectual montages," a technique used by Eisenstein, and nothing of the virulent racist doctrines with which the Nazi regime is identified. *Triumph of the Will* is frequently considered to be the most powerful propaganda film ever made. For years Leni Riefenstahl has been unfairly denied the recognition she deserves as an artist as a result of the political impact of this single work.

Almost nothing is known of the two other films that Riefenstahl contributed to the Nazi propaganda effort except that *Victory of Faith* (1933) was a record of the 1933 Party rally and *Day of Freedom: Our Army* (1935) was a documentary about the Wehrmacht made for Hitler's Minister of Defense, Gen. von Blomberg. They were both shorts, intended like *Triumph of the Will* for domestic indoctrination to the professed ideologies of Nazism.

In an interview with the authors of *Femmes Cineastes* Riefenstahl defends her position: "You must remember that this was 1934, when Hitler had just been brought to power not by a coup d'Etat but by a parliamentary majority freely elected. . . . Why should I have been the only person to foresee the future and to know then that Hitler would lead Germany and the world to catastrophe? Many film makers made films and accepted commands then. None have been accused as I have. Why? Because I am a woman or because the film *Triumph of the Will* was too successful? My film is nothing but a document."

In 1936 Leni Riefenstahl's two-part film masterpiece *Olympia*, recorded for posterity the Berlin Olympic Games. The film was meant to be universal, a celebration of the beauty and grace of the

human body. However, the reception of the film was badly affected by her friendship with Hitler, and it received reviews condemning it as "outspokenly fascist in spirit."

The first half of the *Olympia*, called *Festival of Nations*, begins with an impressive sequence in ancient Greece and glorifies both the architecture and the beauty of the nude body. Not surprisingly, the nude footage was edited out of many prints. The classical opening is followed by an impressive montage of the torch being carried to Berlin and culminates in the lighting of a huge brazier high in the stadium. Next is shown the parade of participants before Hitler and his entourage; some of this was also cut from circulated prints. The remainder of the first film is devoted to track and field events, and it records the great performance of Jesse Owens, the 19-year-old black American whose winning embarrassed and publicly disproved the Nazi claims of Aryan superiority. The second film, *Festival of Beauty*, starts with sequences in the Olympic Village and continues with most of the other events not covered in the first part.

Some of Riefenstahl's innovations were her use of slow motion to capture bodies in flight (in events like the pole vault and the high jump) and a marvelous sequence of swimmers photographed from below. She made very imaginative use of sound mixing to complement the shots: actually she was forced to because she was allowed only one sound camera inside the stadium. The jealous Goebbels, she claimed, attempted to have it forcibly removed by some S.S. men, so Riefenstahl took to standing guard over it herself until the games were concluded.

Three versions of the film were made, in German, English and French. All were slightly different, and most prints were re-edited and censored. However, Riefenstahl did prepare a complete print for the George Eastman House collection.

In 1939 Leni Riefenstahl visited the United States in hopes of promoting and perhaps selling *Olympia* to an American film company. She visited Hollywood, and only one producer would receive her. It was Walt Disney who greeted her publicly; all other Hollywood studios complied with the demands of the anti-Nazi organizations to close their doors to "Nazi agents and other emissaries

of fascism."

Upon her return to Europe she planned two elaborate films, both of which were shelved. From 1940 to 1945, despite ill health (she directed parts from a stretcher), she shot *Tiefland*, a film taken from an opera by Eugene d'Albort. Riefenstahl's activities during the last part of the war are a mystery. It is known that she married a Major Jacobs after a long and frustrating liaison with Ernst Udet, who committed suicide after developing differences with Goering and other top Nazis in the Air Ministry. As Frau Jacobs, she retired to Austria until 1945, when she was arrested and detained by the French for her pro-Nazi activities. She spent years trying to clear herself and return to filmmaking, but it wasn't until 1952, when she was exonerated, that she was allowed to return to her film work. Thirteen years after its inception *Tiefland* had a successful release, but Riefenstahl regarded it as a failure and withdrew it from circulation as soon as it had made a reasonable profit.

In 1956 she started *Schwartzte Fracht* (*Black Cargo*), a documentary on the Black slave trade of East Africa. It progressed well until she was seriously injured in a jeep accident and hospitalized for nearly a year. In 1965 she returned to Africa and finished a 16mm. color feature, as yet unreleased, on a hidden, primitive tribe in the Sudan. Now 70 years old, she is living in Munich, Germany.

**Barbara Hartger**

**THE BLUE LIGHT**—Germany. Writer, Producer, Director, Lead Role: Leni Riefenstahl. Co-Writer: Bela Balasz. Co-Producer: Hans Schneeberger.

**FILMOGRAPHY**—*The Blue Light*, 1932; *Dér Sieg des Glaubens*, 1933; *Triumph des Willens*, 1934; *Olympische Spiele*, 1938; *Tiefland*, 1954; *Schwartzte Fracht*, 1956.

*Barbara Hartger is a recent Art Institute graduate, now working on independent films, animation and a V.H.F. television show. She is looking for a good job.*

## Cleo from Five to Seven (1952), Lion's Love (1969), Agnes Varda

**Distributor: Contemporary-McGraw-Hill**

The French New Wave—that anti-traditional way of making movies more spontaneously, self-consciously, and with different kinds of narrative and visual devices than anything that had ever been done before—began in 1954 with a film called *La Pointe Courte* by Agnes Varda. This full-length film juxtaposes the deteriorating relationship of a couple with life in the fishing village in which they find themselves. The look at the fishermen of *La Pointe Courte* makes an affectionate documentary, but the story of the lovers is flat and symbolic, with no psychological or emotional depth. In 1954 it was a new kind of film. Its editor, Alain Resnais, said at the time that it was uncomfortably close to the kinds of films he hoped to make some day.

Agnes Varda, who had been born in Brussels in 1928, was a still photographer of some renown. She was the official photographer for the Theatre Nationale Populaire in Paris but had no filmmaking experience at all. While most of the New Wave directors lived, breathed, and slept movies, Varda had seen only twelve in her whole life. The main influence on *La Pointe Courte* was literary—Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*. "I didn't know what the cinema was," Varda has said. "I still don't understand how I came to make a film."

It happened somehow, and a career and a movement had begun. The New Wave flourished, but it was several years before Varda could find backing to make a second feature. In the interim she made several shorts. Two of them—*O Saisons, O Chateaux!* and *Du Cote de la cote*—were commissioned by the French National Tourist Office. Though apparently neither project interested Varda particularly, both do show the decorative composition and use of antitheses that are her trademark. A third film, *Opera Mouffe*, records the varied images of Paris' teeming Rue Mouffetard as seen through the eyes of a pregnant woman. Varda was pregnant herself at the time she shot the film (sitting on a little chair at the side of the road day after day

Varda directing *Le Bonheur*



aiming her camera at passers-by), and, in the words of a critic, "the true unity of *Opera Mouffe* is provided by . . . the way in which the images and rhythms reflect the contradictory thoughts and feelings which dominate a woman at such a time."

In 1961 Varda directed her second feature, the film presented at FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74: *Cleo from Five to Seven*. The story of how it came to be made illustrates how things were in the Paris film world in those days. Georges de Beauregard produced Jean-Luc Godard's first feature, *Breathless*. It was so successful and had been so inexpensive that Beauregard asked Godard if he had any friends who made the same kinds of movies. Godard recommended Jacques Demy; Beauregard produced Demy's lovely *Lola*, and then asked Demy if he had any friends to recommend. Demy, who was and is married to Agnes Varda, sent her. "You have carte blanche," Beauregard told Varda, "if you can make me a feature for 50,000 francs." That tiny budget," said Varda, "forced me to shoot in Paris with a small cast. Since I don't like Paris, I chose a subject that wasn't terribly cheerful."

The subject she chose, an appropriate one for a Paris setting, is isolation. Cleo is a famous young singer who may be dying of cancer. In the hours while she waits for the results of lab tests, she finds less and less comfort in her friends, her luxurious white apartment, her talent, her beauty, her accomplishments. Eventually she leaves it all for a walk in the park and meets a young soldier on leave from Algeria. He goes with her to hear the test results, which are promising.

Cleo is a strong heroine, but she isn't very attractive or interesting, at least not initially. As usual, Varda is not interested in psychology or in encouraging audience sympathy. For all its melodramatic plot, *Cleo* is dispassionate. As Cleo gradually discards many of her props and



affectations, we do come to feel more and more satisfaction with her.

Interestingly, though the movie follows Cleo minute-for-minute from the time we see her with a fortune-teller at 5:00, it is only 90 minutes long. It ends at 6:30, not at 7, so it's open-ended. Cleo and the soldier may fall in love; her cancer may be curable. All the possibilities are there, but it's not clear as the film ends what the next half-hour will bring.

Varda reports: "I went to the Parc Montsouris at 10 a.m., at 8 a.m., at 5 a.m., until the light on the grass formed a deliquescent whiteness which interested me. (The scenes which appear in the film were shot early in the morning.) It's this sort of thing, the relationship between the light and the feeling of a place, that I work on a lot. In *Cleo*, white is tragic. White is not the obscurity which invades life, it is the clarity which dissolves existence. Each time Cleo strongly feels the chill of death, her house becomes all white."

When *Cleo* was released in 1962, *Cahiers du cinema* called Varda "a female Zola" who "creates, like Sternberg, her own light." "For the first time," it said, "a woman is presented in terms of sadness and liberty and not of Sunday supplements."

Since *Cleo*, Varda has made a number of shorts and documentaries, including a tribute to Cuba and a reportage on the Black Panthers. She has also made three features: the controversial *Le Bonheur*, *Les Créatures* and, in America, *Lion's Love*. This last, very complex film stars Viva, Shirley Clarke, James Rado and Gerome Ragno (the authors of *Hair*), with a guest appearance by Eddie Constantine. In it a woman director comes to Hollywood hoping to make a film "using stars as real people." The studio heads (played by themselves) refer to

"this girl" from the "new wave" who "does something different with films." In the film this filmmaker is called and played by Shirley Clarke, but, of course, she is Varda as well. At one point, when Clarke isn't playing a scene right, Varda steps into the frame from behind the camera to demonstrate. *Lion's Love* is an intricate, intriguing, very full movie, highly recommended.

*Lion's Love* is all about Hollywood and the old hierarchical ways of making films. It brings to mind that most venerable and respected of the old Hollywood "women's directors" who shakes his head in non-comprehension when Agnes Varda is mentioned and says, "That woman is a real ball-buster."

Barbara Bernstein

CLEO FROM FIVE TO SEVEN—Writer-Director: Agnes Varda. Cinematographer: Jean Rabier. Production Design: Bernard Evein. Music: Michel Legrand. Editor: Janine Verneau. Production: Rome-Paris Films. Actors: Corinne Marchand, Antoine Bourseiller, Dorothee Blank, Michel Legrand, Dominique Davray. France.

FILMOGRAPHY—*La Pointe Courte*, 1954; *O Saisons, O Châteaux!* (short), 1957; *Du Côté de la cote* (short), 1958; *Opera Mouffe* (short), 1958; *Les Fiancées du Pont Macdonald* (short), 1961; *Cleo de cinq à sept*, 1962; *Salut les Cubains*, 1963; *Le Bonheur*, 1965; *Eisa* (documentary), *Les Créatures*, 1966; *Oncle Janco* (short), 1967; *Lion's Love*, *Black Panthers*, 1969.

Barbara Bernstein, an alumna of Doc Films at the University of Chicago, is in the midst of her first film, a documentary on W.P.A. art. She was once a publicist for Twentieth-Century Fox in Paris and now writes for a living.

## The Cool World (1964), Shirley Clarke

Distributor: Zipporah Films

Set in Harlem, *The Cool World* tells the story of Duke, a black adolescent who aspires to the leadership of his gang, the Royal Pythons. Promised a gun by an older Harlem gangster named Priest, Duke sets about raising the purchase money by stealing and pushing drugs. Duke obtains Priest's gun for safe-keeping when Priest is called before the white syndicate leader. Subsequently, Duke and other Python members move into an apartment belonging to Littleman, a teen-ager recently abandoned by his father. Here Duke meets Luanne, a young prostitute who shares her favors with each member of the gang.

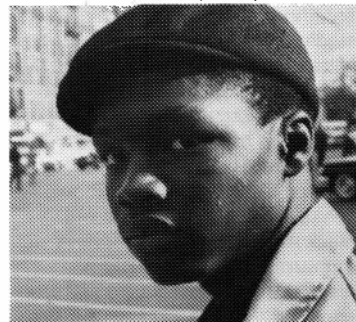
Taking advantage of the lack of leadership afforded by Blood, the dope-addicted gang leader, Duke gains control of the Pythons and tries to transform them from a social club devoted to smoking and drinking to an organized gang capable of defending their own turf. Duke and Luanne fall in love. When he takes her to Coney Island to catch her first glimpse of the sea, she mysteriously disappears.

Following Littleman's murder by the Wolves, a rival gang, Duke begins a retaliatory war which results in the death of Angel, the Wolves' leader. Fleeing to the Python headquarters, Duke finds the corpse of Priest, who has been murdered by the syndicate bosses. He decides to return to his mother's house and is shortly picked up by the police who beat him mercilessly as they take him into custody.

*The Cool World* was the first full-length film ever shot in Harlem. In many respects "the street" is the real protagonist rather than the cast of black adolescents—all amateur actors from Harlem junior high schools. Clarke captures the sidewalk ambience with the constant movement of people, the slang-studded repartee, the wide-eyed children, and the sniffing dogs. Her restless camera, which disconcerted many critics in 1964, expresses perfectly the repressed tensions created by lives lived with limited options. Although the film tends to adopt the reverse prejudice of the ghetto where black equals good and white equals bad, *The Cool World* remains one of the most powerful and brutal portraits

of existence in the squalid atmosphere of a poor, black neighborhood. Filmed in a semi-documentary style, Clarke records all aspects of this cool world with an unrelenting objectivity.

Shirley Clarke began her artistic career as a dancer. She studied and performed with Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, and Doris Humphrey. Unlike most filmmakers, Clarke had no formal training or period of apprenticeship. Using a camera she received as a wedding present, she proceeded to make a finished film. The result was *A Dance in the Sun* (1954).



*The Cool World*

Of this experience she states, "I didn't want to throw my dancing out the window, so I thought I'd make a dance film. I'd seen a few and I thought they were awful and I figured I'd have to be an idiot not to make a better one. Then I got enamored of filmmaking. I found it more interesting than dance."

*A Dance in the Sun* was followed by a series of exceptional short works including *In Paris Parks* (1954), *Bullfight* (1955), *A Moment in Love* (1957), *Brussels' Loops* (1958) and *Bridges-Go-Round* (1959). These films immediately established Clarke as an important force in the avant-garde cinema which centered around New York City.

Building on the experiments of Maya Deren in the 1940's (see notes on *Ritual in Transfigured Time*), Clarke composed dance films which explored the possibilities of cine-dance—works which created dance movements through the manipulations of filming and editing. Such dances exist as independent entities not transferable for stage performance. Like Deren, Clarke was primarily concerned with movement in time and space. In *Bridges-Go-Round* she rejected dependence on human performers by creating movement with inanimate objects—massive structures that appear to glide gracefully through space in relation to our constantly changing perspective.





Clarke has commented on the importance of these early works on her subsequent features, *The Connection* (1960) and *The Cool World* (1964). Though filmed in a semi-documentary style, both works reveal her underlying kinetic response to life. In *The Connection* Clarke rotates her camera 360 degrees to create a definite dance sensation. In *The Cool World* the street scenes and love sequences were designed in space and time, then shot and edited to produce rhythmic patterns.

"Whether I'm working with dancers or actors, I concern myself at all times with the choreography of what is happening on the screen; with its designs, its rhythms, its movements—all elements of dance, but also all elements of life. For me, this is the dance that exists on film; not dance as it exists on the stage, but the extended expanse of the world itself."

Clarke's commitment to independent filmmaking has been unwavering. During the mid-sixties when experimental filmmakers like John Cassavetes and Joseph Strick abandoned the avant-garde for commercial cinema, Clarke joined with Jonas Mekas to establish the New York Film-Makers' Co-operative. By tapping the new market created in colleges and film societies, the Co-op was able to increase distribution for independent productions. Clarke has stated, "I chose independent filmmaking rather than studio filmmaking because I didn't want the studios to decide what people should see."

However, Clarke is the first to proclaim the shortcomings of independent production. She believes that "nobody knows how to distribute independent films." For most filmmakers, independent production becomes an act of love.

For Clarke, her films are neither "underground" nor "Hollywood," but something uniquely her own. Basically her films are comments on the work of other filmmakers. In *Portrait of Jason* (1967), a feature documentary focusing on a black male prostitute, Clarke set out to comment on the cinema verite works of Richard Leacock and Don Pennebaker. Rejecting the techniques of an unobtrusive camera and highly edited footage, Clarke filmed Jason Holliday as he responded to the camera and crew in one extended shooting session. During the process of telling stories, performing, and answering questions, Jason involved himself

with the people behind the camera. Unexpected responses resulted in emotionally charged moments which revealed sudden insights about Jason, the filmmakers, and the unexplored potential of the camera.

For Clarke *Portrait of Jason* is closer to "documentary reality" than the works proffered by cinema verite filmmakers. Yet even in *Jason* which entailed little scripting, no re-takes, and no editing, Clarke remains skeptical of reproducing reality on film. "Right away there's an option given when you ask a 'question.' All of this evokes a very conscious playing at not-acting. There is no difference between a traditional fiction film and a documentary. I've never made a documentary."

Since *Portrait of Jason*, Clarke has devoted herself entirely to exploring the creative possibilities of video. Frustrated by the time lag in filmmaking which transformed her from a creative artist to a passive observer, Clarke prefers the immediacy and intuitive potential of video taping. Fascinated by the process of the medium itself, she finds video a suitable vehicle for play—an element generally stifled by our modern lifestyle.

As in film, Clarke responds to video tape in musical and choreographic terms. She views the process as a theme with multiple variations—an open-ended fugue. By taping off the monitor, Clarke has utilized the capacity of video to double, triple, and quadruple images on a screen—a process she calls "enfolding." She also has developed "video-balls," monitors which hang from chains, so as to incorporate variant movements on tape. As an extension of her experiments in *Portrait of Jason*, Clarke records the response of viewers to tape recordings, thus

composing visual duets.

Living atop New York's Chelsea Hotel, Clarke has gathered together a heterogeneous group of artists from many fields to experiment with the new medium. Recognizing the need to develop standards equal to those of film, Clarke remains convinced of the future of video to develop into an art form. She predicts that development will proceed along two lines: "1) novel/painting. I who can't draw a line can paint fantastic images electronically. 2) theater/experience. This has to do with the interchange between people and comes somewhat closer to therapy."

Most of all Clarke is encouraged by the possibility that women may participate in video as equals of men. Such was never the case in film, although the world of cinema is changing and at some point a new day may dawn.

#### Patricia Erens

THE COOL WORLD. Director: Shirley Clarke. Producer: Frederick Wiseman. Screenplay: Shirley Clarke and Don Lee. Cinematography: Baird Bryant. Editor: Shirley Clarke. Composer and Arranger: Mal Waldron. Music: Dizzy Gillespie. U.S.A.

FILMOGRAPHY. *A Dance in the Sun*, 1954; *In Pans Parks*, 1954; *Bullfight*, 1955; *A Moment in Love*, 1957; *Brussels' Loops*, 1958; *Bridges-Go-Round*, 1959; *Skyscraper*, 1959; *The Connection*, 1960; *Scary Time* (short), 1960; *The Cool World*, 1964; *Robert Frost—A Love Letter to the World*, 1964; *Man in the Polar Regions*, 1967; *Portrait of Jason*, 1967.

## Daisies (1966), Vera Chytilova

Distributor: Audio Brandon

Vera Chytilova, born in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia in 1929, studied architecture and modelled fashions before finding a career in film. An apprenticeship at the government-owned Barrandov film studio led to early jobs as script girl, in continuity and ultimately as assistant director. She began to make personal films in the late fifties; as a student at the Prague Film Faculty, she filmed *The Ceiling* in 1961 and submitted the short as a final project. The film arrived on the crest of the Czech New Wave in the company of films by Ivan Passer, Milos Forman and others. Hallmarks of the new style were formal adventurousness, heightened subjectivity and a general willingness to stray from party-line dogma. Later in the year her short won the Oberhausen Short Film Festival prize. Chytilova was on her way; she had won the right to make feature films.

Her first major project was *Something Different* (1961), a straight-forward comparison of the lives of two women (a housewife and a gymnast). Her most accessible film to date, *Something Different* was commended for its objectivity, its restraint from moralizing. Drawn with Chytilova's characteristic attention to detail, the film excels in its ability to delineate personality. Vera, the housewife, is bored, selfish, superficial and manipulative; placed, however, in apposition to her cold, formal husband, she grows in stature and sympathy. To ease the sense of frustration in her life, she finally opts for an adulterous affair with a younger man.

Elsa, the olympic-standard gymnast, has problems of her own. At 29 she is slightly too old for the rigorous competition of international athletics. Rather than adjust to the reality of advancing age, she compensates by trying even harder. Chytilova draws a parallel between the drudgery of the housewife's routine and the monotony of the gymnast's training regimen but refuses to make value judgments. The film was soundly praised for its compassion.

Certainly no one had an intimation of the shock waves that a later Chytilova film would generate.

"To all those whose indignation is limited to a smashed-up salad." Her sword drawn and banner unfurled, Chytilova's post-dedication to *Daisies* is a clue to the nature of the

adversary position in which she places her audience. Not surprisingly, Barrandov studio officials banned the film, preventing its domestic release. Constructing what she terms "a philosophic documentary take-off," Chytilova has created an experience that is alternately infuriating and gratifying, free-spirited and intense.

In terms of conventional narrative expectations, *Daisies* is an anti-film. Rejecting psychological development, serial chronology and other modes of dramatic involvement, *Daisies* makes its effect through direct attack, employing an extreme form of "optical gymnastics." in the words of one critic. Montage is elaborate and deliberately obtrusive with an extended use of jump cuts, stock footage and other alienation devices. Plot, in a strict sense, has been abandoned; instead, we see a basic situation and its endless variations and repetitions on a theme of ennui.

Two seventeen-year-old girls are the protagonists. They are both named Mary and would be interchangeable except for their contrasting coloring. In an early sequence the girls decide, "since everything is rotten in this world, we too shall be rotten." On the force of that declaration the two pass through a series of misadventures, dalliances and willful pranks. Chytilova chooses not to frame the women's actions in dialogue; when the two Marys do speak, their delivery seems childish and artificial, which only serves to enhance the sketchy, cartoon-like quality of the characterization.

The women toy with the elderly men they encounter on their forays; as you might expect, the relationships with the opposite sex

are expedient and perfunctory. Men function in *Daisies* as little more than a means to free meals and a free ride. After embarking with their companions on trains, the girls dump them. What does endure without check, however, is the grotesque, insatiable appetite of the two Marys. In scene after scene the women are shown in various stances of their favorite pastime—eating. Continually gorging, stuffing and devouring, with a sensual abandon that recalls *La Grande bouffe*, the pair lustily exceeds the pale lines which traditionally prescribe the limits of "feminine" deportment.

Occasionally the women are forced to seek respite; we watch as they giggle and retreat to the nearest lavatory before another siege. Such is the tempo of *Daisies*, a curious see-sawing from dining hall to restroom, from bloated stupor to forced emission. The metaphoric extensions of consumption and overkill are unmistakable; by implication both socialist and capitalist societies are under indictment.

On the antics of her characters Chytilova comments: "These girls are neither ready to accept, nor to give, nor to create their own life and world." As passengers caught in a nihilistic void, the two Marys offer frenetic, motive-less activity in place of thought and emotion. Yet, Chytilova skillfully presents these manic acts as something humorous rather than ponderous. She makes us laugh when the blonde Mary, on the threshold of seduction by a rather worn-out but persevering lover, dances in the nude, barely covered by the strategically-positioned display cases which house the host's butterfly collection.

Even in the intimacy of the bedroom, a habitat where fictional characters customarily express emotion and inject personality, Grand Guignol insists. Individuality is a null value; typically, Mary's seducer spews lame clichés without expression or sincerity. But it is this puppet-like humor, "the mechanization of life" (congruent to Bergson's formulation of the essence of comedy), which lends whimsy to an essentially grim commentary. The final rampage, an epiphany of sorts, culminates with the destruction of a banquet hall. The two Marys tread on gourmet delicacies with comical stiletto heels; we see documentary footage juxtaposed with shots of the spree. A chandelier crashes and is transformed into an atomic explosion, burned-out buildings, gutted submarines. Through the juxtaposition one grasps the relationship between individual gluttony and mass consumption: that devastation, destruction on a grand scale, may be its logical implication.

To reduce *Daisies* to a schematic synopsis robs the work of its vitality, its rich pictorial texture. The experience of *Daisies* is much more, in its truly masterful integration of rhythm, mise-en-scene, color and sound. So dense is the film's visual track that the casual viewer may be overpowered on an initial viewing. For this reason Chytilova's films are not easily "read," inasmuch as their frame of reference is pure cinema.

The spectacular optical effects of *Daisies* were devised and photographed by Jaroslav Kucera, the director's husband. Alternating black-and-white stock with exotic color sequences Kucera implanted a polar construction within the film's design which supports its thematic tensions. Scenic designer Ester Krumbachova, who co-authored the script with the director, conceived visuals that evoke the slickness of fashion magazines, modulated by Czech fin-de-siecle ornamentation.

The soundtrack of *Daisies* is free-flowing and eclectic in its sources, which range from Wagner's "Götterdämmerung" to contemporary jazz. In general, the soundtrack compliments the visuals rather than undercutting their significance. The concluding sequence exemplifies the tendency of the audio to reinforce picture tracks. As the camera swoops over the demolished hall, we hear the amplified whispers of the two

Marys, lending a mysterious and plaintive note to the proceedings. A critic, Claire Clouzot, noted that "it is surprising . . . that the film does not end with its own dissolution, with the film physically turning to ashes on the screen instead of the final shot of a pseudo-mushroom explosion. As it is, it does not include the viewer in the general extinction."

*Stephanie Goldberg*

**DAISIES** Directed by Vera Chytilova. Screenplay by Vera Chytilova and Ester Krumbachova. Based on a story by Chytilova, Krumbachova and Pavel Juracek. Produced by Barrandov Studio of Prague. Running time: 74 minutes.

**FILMOGRAPHY**—Three Men Missing, 1957; Green Roads, 1959; The Ceiling, 1961; A Bag of Fleas, 1962; Something Different, 1963; Pearls of the Deep (one episode: The World Cafeteria), 1965; *Daisies*, 1966; Fruits of Paradise, 1969.

## Dream Life (1971) Mireille Dansereau and Canadian Women Filmmakers

**Distributor: Faroun Films**

Mireille Dansereau is a 29-year-old filmmaker from Quebec whose fourth film is *La Vie revee* (*Dream Life*). This film tells the story of a friendship between two women who struggle to liberate themselves from the image of the "ideal man." Dansereau has scenes of women passing men on the street and tipping their hats, many jokes and parodies and a ride in the country with two women and a man singing a song from *Jules et Jim*. The major premise of this film is role reversal—a step towards liberation. Dansereau states that women are "being free like men told us to be free . . . to be able to cope with them, in their way of being free. . . . Now let's try to create what we are." This is a film of women in their first success.

Dansereau tried to show two women as real human beings. "I wanted to show that their friendship could take the place of love. Great friendship between women can exist, so that for a time at least, you can have so much out of it that you don't need men." Dansereau does not consider this a film about women's liberation. She is primarily interested in the individual's subconscious and how



*Daisies*



it relates to the conscious mind. That the film was released when the liberation movement was first becoming very strong, Dansereau feels, is the reason for it to be considered a film of liberation, besides the fact that it was done by a woman. "It's simply that real friendship between women was never shown on the screen. It was always sexual or filled with hatred and jealousy."

In 1967 Mireille Dansereau made her first film, *Moi un jour*, a short which was selected to be shown at the Canadian Film Festival in Montreal. While she attended the Royal College of Arts in London the following year, she directed her second film, *Compromise*, which won first prize at the National Student Film Festival in England. Her third film was *Forum*, an hour-long documentary on a Living Theater actor.

Not until the early 1960's did feature film production become an active industry in Canada. Participation of women in this industry was fairly rare. In the early years of American filmmaking, Canadian women such as Mary Pickford and Nell Shipman came to the United States to star in movies and also to work in the production end of the industry. Since the Canadian film industry has increased in the amount of production, so have the number of women working in it.

Among the Canadian women in the film industry is Arla Saar, a film editor who has made a great impact on Canadian films. Directors Sylvia Spring and Mireille Dansereau began their careers in the mid-1960's but did not get their films released until several years later. The attempts by these two Canadian directors exemplify the problems in a majority of Canadian filmmaking: long delays, low budgets and poorly exhibited films. Dansereau's film *La Vie revee* was awarded a special jury prize in the



1973 Canadian Film Awards, but it has only been shown commercially in Montreal. Spring has turned to television work and has formed an all-women cooperative film production company.

The Canadian documentary film has a long and internationally recognized history with the Canadian government instrumental in its development. Women directed few documentary films until the late 1950's, but by the mid-1960's women including Bonny Klein, Patricia Watkins, Anne-Claire Poirier and Tanya Ballantyne became prominent filmmakers. The idea of "cinema verite" in Canada came from years of working on documentaries.

Recently the National Film Board of Canada has begun a series of films by women, about women. Mireille Dansereau is among the directors and Anne-Claire Poirier is the producer of the series, *Erl tant que femmes (As Far as Women are Concerned)*, in the French-language section of the series *Challenge for Change*. Dansereau's film in that series is *J'me marie, j'me marie pas*, and it consists of long interviews with four women on their decisions to marry or not.

Since financial problems always caused the greatest obstacles in filmmaking, the majority of Canadian women directors and producers have been involved in television work. Television is also an excellent area for producers and directors to work at their experiments and perfect their craft. The major problem with television is that women have been traditionally restricted to "assistant" positions such as research assistant or researcher. In the last few years more women's names have been seen in the Canadian television credits as producer or director. Dodi Robb has been in charge of daytime programming at the CBC; Beryl Fox has come to the fore as a

documentary filmmaker with her Vietnam documentary. Most of the work by women has been limited to daytime productions, while the evening productions (where most of the money is) are handled by men.

The most freedom available to women filmmakers is through freelance work although they are still limited to expressing themselves within the context of a program format, as do Susan Murgatroyd, Joan Fiore and Beryl Fox in the films for the series *Here Come the Seventies*.

Most of the women filmmakers have stayed within the traditions that have long been established in the Canadian film and television industry. Experimental filmmakers are the exception; those women work without financial or commercial backing. Joyce Wieland is the best known of the experimental filmmakers. She goes beyond just changing the subject matter and its presentation to experimentation with the medium itself—changing the texture of the film, using subtitles, piercing holes through the film stock. By using these techniques (and many others) she forces the viewer to perceive the films in a different manner and causes new attitudes in film watching.

In the last fifteen years participation of women in Canadian film production has steadily increased. Mireille Dansereau in her feature film *La Vie revee* has been one of the first to show what great contributions Canadian women filmmakers can make.

#### Martha I. Goldner

LA VIE REVEE. 90 min. Director: Mireille Dansereau. Producer: Association Cooperatives des Productions Audio-Visuelles.)

FILMOGRAPHY. *Moi, un jour*, 1966; *Compromise*, 1968; *Forum*, 1969; *La Vie revee*, 1971.

Martha Goldner is working on her degree in art history at Northeastern Illinois University. She is involved in the Women's Studies Program as well as film courses.

## Loving Couples (1964), Mai Zetterling

Distributor: Audio Brandon

*Loving Couples* was Mai Zetterling's first full-length feature film and first effort as a director after a long and successful career as an actress. Born in 1925 in Vasteras, Sweden, Zetterling began her professional life in the theater of her own country and eventually moved into film acting. She achieved international recognition in 1944 through her portrayal of a terrorized shopgirl in Alf Sjöberg's *Torment*. Film roles in England and America followed.

Zetterling began directing in England, where she made four documentaries for the BBC. In 1962 she turned to independent production with *The War Game*, a short feature. *The War Game* deals with two young boys who battle over a toy gun, chasing each other to the top of a block of apartments. It is an overtly allegorical film and strongly denounces the absurdity of war.

After finishing *The War Game* Zetterling returned to Scandinavia where her four feature films, *Loving Couples* (1964) *Night Games* (1966) and *The Girls* (1968), and *Doctor Glas* (1968) were produced. In these the political interest evidenced in *The War Games* is channeled into a concern with the oppression of women. In addition, Zetterling's major work reflects a fascination with convoluted psychology, which has characterized the Scandinavian theatrical tradition from the time of Ibsen and Strindberg. "At the center of it all one senses a kind of feminist fury, a raging humiliation which grows more vehement and implacable in each successive film," wrote Nils Peter Sundgren in his book *The New Swedish Cinema*.

*Loving Couples*, as its title suggests, treats problems of heterosexual love and marriage. "A woman is emotionally formed by men," the director has said, "and never quite breaks away from them, even if she would like to." The film is based on a series of novels, *Froknarna von Pahlen*, by the eminent Swedish writer Agnes von Krusenstjerna. Set in Sweden during the years immediately preceding the first world war, the story is told in flashback and concerns three young women from different classes of society who are brought together in the maternity ward of a Stockholm hospital. All had gotten pregnant the previous





summer at a party given by the Landborg family, and their prior history is revealed as a series of events which leads each to her fate in motherhood.

Agda (Harriet Andersson) developed a bohemian lifestyle after enduring a childhood on the streets which included a seduction by an aging lecher. Reckless and flighty, Agda was invited to the Landborgs' party to model for Stellan, a young homosexual artist (Jan Malmström). During her stay she embarked on an intrigue with the Landborgs' son Bernard (Heinz Hopf), but when she learned she was pregnant, she married the artist Stellan in return for a substantial cash gift from the Landborg family. Taking a casual and contemptuous attitude toward motherhood, Agda has her baby while carrying on a flirtation with the doctor.

In contrast to Agda's defensive frivolity, Adele (Gunnel Lindblom) has reacted to the vicissitudes of her life by becoming bitter and sullen. Of lower-class birth, she resents the patronage of others more fortunate than herself. Her sour attitude was even more pronounced after an early, unhappy romantic attachment. Eventually she married one of the Landborgs' servants, thereby becoming a servant to the family herself. In this capacity she attended the summer party. Later, in the hospital, when Dr. Lewin (Gunnar Björnstedt) tells her that her baby has been stillborn, she remains unmoved, still coldly withdrawn from any positive emotional involvement with the world around her.

The aristocratic member of this trio of new mothers is Angela (Gio Petre). Orphaned early in life, she became greatly attached to her Aunt Petra (Anita Björk). After a lesbian encounter with one of her teachers, she fell in love with her aunt's former lover Thomas, an archaeologist (Hans Strååt).

Pregnant and cast off by Thomas, Angela determined to stand up against the prejudices of her time and bear her illegitimate child, revealing an unexpected strength beneath her surface sensitivity. The pain and suffering she endures while giving birth form the climax of Zetterling's film.

The difficulties and traumas faced by each of these three women are brought about by two things: the unfeeling brutality of the men in their lives and the inequities inherent in the class-structured society around them. Peter Cowie has written: "The men in *Loving Couples* can be divided into those who seek their sexual gratification without a thought for the consequences, and those who, in the words of one elder of the von Pahlen family, stay at home 'lapping cream like castrated tomtomcats' . . . But the men in their turn have been emasculated by the system, by the Edwardian hypocrisy of the upper classes of Europe before the first world war shattered their repose."

Zetterling's decision to set her narrative in a period when sexual repression and inhuman attitudes toward women were at a high point adds power to her indictment of male selfishness and social hypocrisy. These two dehumanizing forces are combined in the institution of marriage, which is viewed in *Loving Couples* from a cynical perspective. "Marriage—it's like falling asleep for the rest of your life," remarks one of the film's protagonists. An even harsher judgment on heterosexual relationships is passed by the embittered servant Adele, who pronounces at one point: "There isn't any love—it's just beds and dirt and slime."

Following the lead of other Scandinavian artists, Zetterling chooses to film her story with erotic explicitness, an explicitness which takes on a special meaning in her

Adele during her labor in *Loving Couples*.



case since it reflects a woman's view of sexuality. "Miss Zetterling has eschewed the romanticizing or moralizing to which her male colleagues are prone," commented Judith Crist in her review of *Loving Couples*. "Hers is a distinctly female frankness in her dealing bluntly with much that men tend at best to blush over or smirk at."

Other aspects of Zetterling's artistry in *Loving Couples* are also traceable to her unique background and her place in the Swedish film tradition. Obviously her impeccable casting skills and her assured direction of actors and actresses owe much to her own experience as an actress. In her outstanding work with performers Zetterling follows a long line of distinguished Swedish filmmakers beginning with Victor Seastrom and Mauritz Stiller. Many of the performers she chose for *Loving Couples* had previously been trained in their craft by Swedish directors such as Ingmar Bergman.

Zetterling's visual style is less clearly related to prevailing trends in her own country. Because of the baroque complexity of her images and her fondness for the grotesque, she has often been compared to Fellini. But many of the visual qualities of her films are undoubtedly derived at least in part from Alf Sjöberg, whose film *Torment* played an important part in Zetterling's early career as an actress. Zetterling's style seems to share the expressionistic tendencies of Sjöberg's, especially when one considers the characteristically bold contrasts in lighting which are found in the films of both.

In *Loving Couples* the famed Swedish cinematographer Sven Nykvist provides a masterful interpretation of Zetterling's idiosyncratic visual preoccupations. In this film her style works effectively to promote a strong emotional involvement with

the three female protagonists as well as a sense of the complex and oppressive social environment which is victimizing them.

In the two feature films Zetterling has made following *Loving Couples*, her tortured, psychologically dense feminism has been even more pronounced. *Night Games*, with Ingrid Thulin, treats the emotionally crippling mother-fixation of a young boy. Again, the action is set in the early part of the century, but the script this time is based on an original story composed by the director herself. Her most recent feature, *The Girls*, deals with a troupe of actors touring with the play *Lysistrata*. Though Zetterling has been largely inactive in filmmaking during the last few years, she did contribute a short segment on weight-lifting to David Wolper's *Visions of Eight*, a documentary on the 1972 Olympic Games.

Virginia Wright Wexman

LOVING COUPLES. 118 min. Director: Mai Zetterling. Screenplay: Mai Zetterling and David Hughes (based on the novels *Froknarna von Pahlen* by Agnes von Krusenstjerna). Producer: Rune W. Kranz. Cinematographer: Sven Nykvist. Music Arrangement: Rodger Wallis. Editor: Paul Davies. Art Director: Jan Boleslow. Original title: *Älskande Par*.

#### FILMOGRAPHY.

*The Polite Invasion* (documentary), 1960; *Lords of Little Egypt* (doc.), 1961; *The Prosperity Race* (doc.), 1962; *The War Game* (short), 1962; *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy* (doc.), 1963; *Loving Couples*, 1964; *Night Games*, 1966; *Doctor Glas*, 1968; *The Girls*, 1968; *Visions of Eight* (doc.; segment on weight-lifting), 1974.

Virginia Wright Wexman is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Chicago and a lecturer in film at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus. She has written on film for the Chicago Reader and a number of other publications.

# Maedchen in Uniform (1931),

Leontine Sagan

Distributor: Film Images

There are several remarkable aspects to Leontine Sagan's *Maedchen in Uniform*, the most striking of which is the absence of the customary male figures both in the direction and performance of the film. (Sagan did receive the help of the male director Carl Froelich, one of the most experienced directors of the German cinema at that time). Not only did a woman direct the film in 1931, but the script was based upon a play written by a woman (Christa Winsloe's *Gestern und Heute or Yesterday and Today*) and the cast is entirely composed of women. It also was the first film in Germany to have been cooperatively produced, which means that the cast and crew formed a cooperative film company in which there were shares rather than salaries. The film becomes even more remarkable when we consider the historical context in which it appeared. By 1931 Hitler was in the ascendancy, and a wave of nationalism was spreading throughout the country; this was both reflected in and accelerated by the newsreels and films, which were almost entirely nationalistic, by this time. In this milieu appeared Sagan's film, which is overtly anti-nationalistic, anti-Prussian, anti-authoritarian. Not surprisingly, a separate ending, which was pro-fascist, was shown in Germany, and eventually Goebbels had the film banned as unhealthy. Sagan and most of her cast exiled themselves from Germany after the film was released, and Sagan turned back to her former interest in theatre after an unsuccessful last film made in England, *Men of Tomorrow* (1932). She eventually returned to her earlier home in Johannesburg and co-founded the National Theatre there.

The setting of *Maedchen in Uniform* is a Potsdam boarding school for aristocratic girls from military families. Sagan's choice of location is an explicit indication of her intention, which is to juxtapose the Prussian values, epitomized by Potsdam and the headmistress who rules the school, against the humanitarian values of the schoolgirl Manuela and her teacher Fraulein von Bernburg. These two value systems are not simply presented in opposition. In dialectical fashion, much in the manner of Eisenstein's dialectical

montage, colliding images are set up against each other in order to demonstrate their interconnection and logical progression. Thus the film opens with a montage of images suggesting the Prussian style: military statuary, the soldierlike steeple of the church, suggesting the religiosity which customarily accompanies such values and the clock, implying the relation of present time to past and future, perhaps the inevitability of the historical process, the formation of the Germany to come out of the Prussian past. From this montage of images the camera follows the marching, regimented schoolgirls through the Gothic archways to the interior of the school, which mirrors the exterior in style and values. The Prussian headmistress who reigns within the school, with her dictates of discipline, order, hunger, is a reflection of the rising *fuehrer* outside; like Hitler, the headmistress shares his megalomania and its concomitant impotence, suggested by her use of the cane. The fact that it is a woman who enforces the militaristic values inherited from a patriarchal society warns against easy dichotomies between male and female values and indicates that the corruption of power knows no sexual boundaries.

Over against the headmistress and her regime Sagan postulates Manuela, the antithesis of the Prussian values, who has suffered from the loss of her mother and the repressive manner of an aunt before arriving at the school. Manuela's sensitivity, insecurity and motherlessness prevent her, fortunately, from accommodating herself to her dehumanizing surroundings and place her in need of maternal and emotional sustenance. From our first glimpse

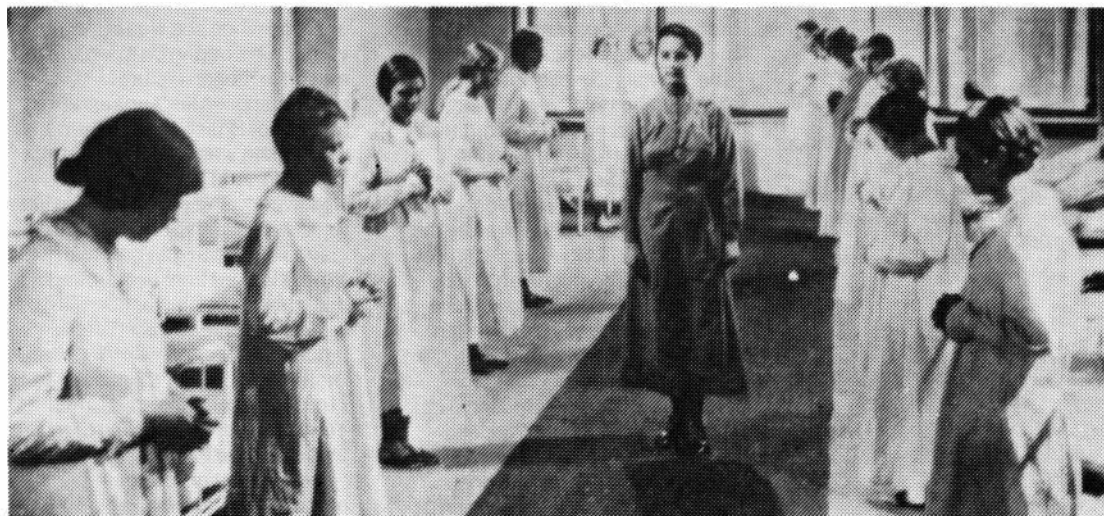
of her teacher, Fraulein von Bernburg, it is apparent that von Bernburg is destined to fulfill this role. She, as well as Manuela, is photographed with a luminosity which is repeated in subsequent scenes. The most dazzling of such scenes is the one in which Fraulein von B. comes to the dormitory room to give the girls their good-night kiss. They line up with rather frenzied anticipation, indicating the enormity of their emotional needs and also the erotic undertone of the school, which seems an inevitable consequence of a repressive atmosphere. This erotic ambience is made explicit when Fraulein von B. and Manuela passionately kiss. Again they are surrounded by a luminous halo, which is either a sanctification (reinforced by the angelic postures of the girls) of what at the time must have seemed a shocking event or a romanticization and highlighting of a love relationship in striking contrast to the headmistress' inhumanity and emotional sterility. The maternalism and religiosity of the embrace are of course classic ingredients of love in the western world and particularly for the Germany of that time, which equated love and patriotism with motherhood.

But the film departs quite radically from the conventional in its open presentation of the possibilities of love between two women—and *open* is the key word here, since repressed homosexuality, undeclared and unexamined, would be a matter of course, as in the Nazi movement outside. But it is the openness of Manuela's declaration, in a moment of drunken hilarity, of her love for Fraulein von B. which so scandalizes the headmistress. Manuela is denounced by this

*fuehrer*, just as homosexuals were periodically denounced and purged during the Nazi era, despite the continued presence of the homosexual Captain Roehm as leader of the storm troopers. That Sagan wishes us to place the relationship between the two women in a wider context is unquestionable since she precedes the shot of the two women in haloed embrace with a replay of Prussian imagery—clock, military statues, garrison bugle in the background. This juxtaposition suggests both the inevitability of conflict between these values and the progression from one to the other.

To restate the film's dialectic, the collision between the headmistress' authoritarian and repressive tactics (thesis) and Manuela's emotionality and human responsiveness to another (antithesis) leads to a breakdown or breakthrough in the system (synthesis). As Wilhelm Reich has formulated: "Repression posits its own destruction, since as a result of repression, instinctual energy is powerfully dammed up until it finally breaks through the repression" ("Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis," *Sex-Pol Essays*). The breakthrough comes not only through Manuela's open declaration of love for Fraulein von B. but also through the joining of the girls in solidarity against the headmistress and in support of Manuela's rights. Once Manuela, who has gained the love of her schoolmates, has been ostracized by the headmistress, the girls join together and seek Manuela out, in defiance of the headmistress' decree.

This last scene is enormously compelling both because of its emotional power and visual design. The central staircase within the



Maedchen in Uniform

school, which has been repeatedly focused on throughout the film, becomes the setting for Manuela's attempted suicide after she has been disgraced and temporarily deserted by Fraulein von B. The girls sense she is in danger and begin running up and down the staircase calling for her. Finally they spot her at the top, about to plummet to her death, and they retrieve her. She and Fraulein von B. have an emotional reunion, and Sagan has their faces merge, anticipating Bergman's *Persona* by over thirty years. The headmistress retreats from the scene at the end, apparently defeated. Yet the bugle call associated with Prussianism is granted the last word in the film, suggesting a number of possible interpretations. On the one hand, this is an accurate prediction of the triumph of authoritarian forces in Germany and elsewhere; on the other, it may be read as a rallying call for anti-authoritarian forces, for the forces of love and compassion represented by Manuela and Fraulein von B. and the young girls who joined forces with them. Whatever interpretation we settle upon, it is clear that Sagan allows for no easy solutions, which is part of the magnificence of her achievement in this film.

*Nancy Scholar Zee*

**MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM.** 90 min., Germany. Director: Leontine Sagan. Screenplay: F. O. Andam, Christa Winsloe, based on the play *Gestern und Heute* by Christa Winsloe. Cinematographer: Reima Kuntze, Fritz Weihmayr. Art Direction: F. Maurischat, F. Winkler-Tannenberg. Music: Hanson Milde-Meissner.

**FILMOGRAPHY.** *Maedchen in Uniform*, 1931; *Men of Tomorrow*, 1932.

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## Outrage (1952), Ida Lupino

Distributor: Ivy Films

It is almost in spite of her that there has been an upsurge of interest, especially among women, in the films of Ida Lupino. As far as Lupino herself is concerned, there are no unique feminine insights, no special emphases on problems confronted by women, nothing in her films that should be of particular interest to feminist-oriented groups. As she told Marjorie Rosen in a 1973 interview:

*They (her films) were not ONLY about women's problems, they were definitely about men's too. I certainly wasn't about to crash the man's world because I had no idea of wanting to be a director. I HAD to take over my first picture; with the second, we couldn't afford anybody else.*

Thus, for Lupino directing was a necessity. In 1949, after seventeen years of screen acting, she founded a film production company, The Filmakers, with Anson Bond and Collier Young after she and Bond had successfully written and produced a TV film. With Paul Jarrico she wrote the screenplay for the firm's production, *Not Wanted*. When the film's director, Elmer Clifton, was unable to complete the film because of illness, Lupino took over the direction, though her contribution was not enough to warrant directorial credit.

Lupino's debut as a full-fledged director came the following year with her company's second production, *Never Fear* (later retitled *The Young Lovers*). She collaborated with Collier Young on the script. The film was sufficient—because it was personal and warm. Apparently because of her own experience as an actress, she reveals an extraordinary understanding of what an individual is capable of handling comfortably and well in a role. This understanding is probably responsible for her preference for direction by suggestion rather than by demand. As the long list of her TV credits attests, her methods have proven effective and have won her respect as a competent director despite her alleged dislike for the position.

Except for her last motion picture Lupino's films have all tackled serious subjects, at times with a realistic, even documentary approach, though she hasulti-



mately opted for a Hollywood happy ending. Her first film, *Not Wanted*, is a study of an unwed mother. This film was followed by one about a dancer whose career is jeopardized when she contracts polio. The conflict between a young tennis star and her over-zealous mother is explored in *Hard, Fast and Beautiful*, and in *The Bigamist*, as the title suggests, questions are raised about our laws governing bigamy.

*Outrage*, the film being shown at this festival, is a study of rape. Though the film was released by RKO, it was evidently not widely publicized or reviewed. Mala Powers was cited for her effective portrayal of the victim, a portrayal to which Lupino obviously contributed considerably, but the impact of the film has evidently been softened by its rather facile, upbeat ending. This film, along with the earlier *Not Wanted* and *Never Fear*, led to *Holiday* magazine's singling Lupino out for its 1950 award "to the woman who has done most to improve standards and to honestly present American life, ideals and people to the rest of the world."

Ida Lupino is actually more widely known as an actress than as a director. She was born in 1918 in London into an Italian theatrical family that took pride in its thespian tradition. Lupino became involved in acting when she was quite young. She began on the stage but moved to motion picture performance. After appearing in a number of British films in the early thirties she was offered a contract by Paramount and moved to Hollywood. She made thirteen films while with Paramount (several on loan to other studios) before asking to be released from her contract because of dissatisfaction with her roles. After three years of free-lancing she signed with Warner Brothers and while there co-starred in her most remembered films: *They Drive by Night*, *High Sierra* and *The Hard Way*.

Besides acting, directing, producing and scripting films,

Lupino has written music and would like to devote more time to it. In her interview with Rosen she said, "If . . . I could stay home and take care of the house and write screenplays and lyrics, I'd do it. But I direct simply because it's a livelihood. I have no alternative." Whatever her expressed sentiment regarding film and TV direction, it is clear that Ida Lupino is a talented and competent person whose energy and creativity have prompted her to meet the challenges of a many-faceted professional life and to move into many male-dominated areas with assurance.

*Janice Welsch*

**Not Wanted.** Film Classics. 1949. Elmer Clifton, dir. Sally Forrest, Keefe Brasselle, Leo Penn, Dorothy Adams. Lupino assisted with production, direction and screenplay.

**Never Fear.** Eagle Lion. 1950. Ida Lupino. Sally Forrest, Keefe Brasselle, Hugh O'Brien, Larry Dobkin, Eve Miller. Lupino also co-scripted.

**Outrage.** RKO. 1950. Ida Lupino. Mala Powers, Tod Andrews, Robert Clarke, Raymond Bond. Lupino also co-scripted.

**Hard, Fast and Beautiful.** RKO. 1951. Ida Lupino. Claire Trevor, Sally Forrest, Carleton G. Young, Robert Clarke.

**On the Loose.** RKO. 1951. Charles Lederer, dir. Joan Evans, Melvyn Douglas, Lynn Bari, Robert Arthur. Lupino only assisted with production.

**Beware, My Lovely.** RKO. 1952. Harry Homer, dir. Ida Lupino, Robert Ryan, Taylor Holmes, Barbara Whiting. Lupino also assisted with production.

**The Hitchhikers.** RKO. 1953. Ida Lupino. Edmond O'Brien, Frank Lovejoy, William Talman, Jose Torvay. Lupino also co-scripted.

**The Bigamist.** The Filmakers. 1953. Ida Lupino. Edmond O'Brien, Joan Fontaine, Ida Lupino, Edmund Gwenn, Jane Darwell. Lupino also assisted with production.

**Private Hell 36.** The Filmakers. 1954. Don Siegel, dir. Steve Cochran, Howard Duff, Dean Jagger, Dorothy Malone. Lupino co-scripted and played a small role.

**The Trouble with Angels.** Columbia. 1966. Ida Lupino. Rosalind Russell, Hayley Mills, June Harding, Binnie Barnes, Mary Wickes.

*Janice Welsch is a doctoral candidate at Northwestern University. Her dissertation is entitled Popular Post-World War II Images of Women in Hollywood Films. She has taught seminars in the images of women in film at Northwestern University.*



# Peasant Women of Ryazan (1927), Olga Preobrajenskaia

**Distributor: Canadian Film Institute**

For many years *Peasant Women of Ryazan* was a lost film. Briefly dispatched by film historians as "sentimental" and "moralistic," totally neglected by other critics, the film's circulation was restricted to archive screenings. Recently, however, *Peasant Women of Ryazan* has acquired the audience and partisanship that it deserves because of the flowering of feminist consciousness. On the strength of its success at the London and Toronto Women's Film Festivals, the film is once more being admired—for the artfulness with which it presents the lives of the peasants as well as the gracefulness with which it poses ideological questions about women and politics.

The "women problem," as nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals characterized it, referred to a number of interlocking issues. Feminists clamored for various reforms: suffrage, abortion-on-demand, easily obtainable contraception, free marriage and divorce. These rights were realized in 1917 when Lenin instituted several decrees which nullified the male prerogative. In consequence, the legislation affirmed women's complete right to self-determination in economic, social and sexual matters. Kate Millett notes in *Sexual Politics* that the legislation declared it "a matter of course that (women) freely choose their own domicile, name and citizenship."

The legislative battle thus ceded, the problem remained as to how opinion and behavior could be shaped to reflect the new political consciousness. A didactic cinema with an explicitly political content was a key solution. A far-sighted Lenin believed cinema to be the most influential of all art forms and funded the nascent industry accordingly. Film was instrumental in directing communication from the government to a diverse, rural, often illiterate population.

Born out of expediency, the political film was infused with a sensibility that motivated experimentation and innovation. Besides encouraging the production of films that imparted messages of social and political significance, the industry bore the stamp of the new egalitarian impulse within its structural

organization. The climate of post-revolutionary film-production was more hospitable to women than ever before; not simply actresses, women secured influential, strategic positions as editors, scenarists and directors.

One such woman was Olga Preobrajenskaia, a former actress and assistant to Vsevolod Pudovkin. Preobrajenskaia shared a rare distinction with colleague Esther Shub, director of compilation films such as *Fall of the Romanoff Dynasty*. Both were among the first women in Russia to direct films that dealt with social upheaval and displacement; both had the good fortune to see their films distributed to an enthusiastic mass audience. Before Preobrajenskaia began her directing career in 1915, she was already well known to the Russian public. She had starred in many films, among them three by Vladimir Gai: *A Nest of Noblemen*, *Petersburg Slums* and *War and Peace*; as well as Protazanov's *Keys to Happiness* (he co-directed *War and Peace*).

Her experience in front of the camera prompted her to ask for an opportunity to direct. She was granted a contract to make modestly budgeted films for children.

Preobrajenskaia's first three films were so well received (especially *Kashtanka*, from the Chekhov story) that she was finally granted, in 1927, the opportunity to create a film for an older and more sophisticated audience. The resulting film, *Peasant Women of Ryazan*, was enormously successful with both domestic and international audiences. Its initial cost was 46,000 rubles; two years later it brought a return of 210,000 rubles.

Aside from the fact of its

commercial success, the film is notable for a number of reasons. Paul Rotha places it in the category of "Reconstruction Film." Such films typically celebrate the advantages of the Soviet regime, the rebuilding of the New Russia. The genre, which includes such films as Sergei Eisenstein's *The General Line*, portrays the special condition of the worker, the citizen and the peasant. In 1927, the 10-year anniversary of the revolution, there was a special impetus to produce films of this genre. For Olga Preobrajenskaia the occasion was also an opportunity to renew her commitment to documentary realism, to demonstrate what Rotha refers to as "a feeling for movement of material, a deep sense of natural beauty and an idea of pictorial composition."

Commended by a critic as "the most moral film I have ever seen," the film's story concerns two peasant women from the village of Ryazan: Anna and Wassilissa. Anna is fated to be a tragic victim of prerevolutionary oppression; Wassilissa is strong, independent, supportive—qualities which fate her to be a survivor.

After a spring marriage to Ivan, Anna loses her husband to war. She resides in her husband's home where she is forced to suffer the lecherous advances of her father-in-law, Wassily. Wassily rapes Anna and impregnates her. After she bears his bastard child, her suffering eventually becomes insupportable. Ivan returns from military service and rejects her; she is ostracized by both the town and her family. At the riotous spring festival Anna commits suicide. The tragic cycle is completed.

Wassilissa, daughter of Wassily, stands in sharp relief to the tragic victim. When Wassily announces

that he will never permit her marriage to a local blacksmith, she is not compliant. She turns to her lover and inquires, "If I come and live with you without marriage, will you promise to honor me?" She is not intimidated either by the people who smear her portal with pitch to censure her for her action. Wassilissa laughs her defiance and spits on the door.

Wassilissa becomes guardian of Anna's baby after Anna's death and embodies Preobrajenskaia's hope for the future. Scornfully she announces her father's guilt to Ivan and departs with the child. Thus the story ends on a hopeful note. As a critic remarked at the time, "The new woman, free, brave and strong, and the child in her care, and scientific social conditions are shown to be what matters most . . . etc. In the new world there will be no victimized Annas, no room for cheap scoundrels, or men dulled with outworn prejudice in social and marital matters."

The two women are supported by a gallery of intelligent feminine portraits. Even Wassily's peasant mistress is depicted with a measure of sympathy and understanding. While the characters that the director is creating are drawn as deliberate types, they are generally balanced in their distribution of traits.

The sensitivity to the peasant's milieu, and the consistent attention to the detail and color of Ryazan, prevent the film from deteriorating into a simple political tract. Long after viewing it one recalls images of undulating grain fields, of tapestry-like patterns of women washing clothes. Reclaimed by modern audiences, *Peasant Women of Ryazan* works like the best political films—providing positive, compelling images of a new world.

Stephanie Goldberg

**PEASANT WOMEN OF RYAZAN (BABY RYAZANSKIE)** Director: Olga Preobrajenskaia. Co-Director: Ivan Pravov. Screenplay: Olga Vishnevskaya, Boris Altschuler. Cinematography: Konstantin Kuznetsov. Design: Dmitri Kolupayev.

**FILMOGRAPHY** *Miss Peasant*, 1916; *Kashtanka*, 1922; *Locksmith and Chancellor*, 1923, *Peasant Women of Ryazan*, 1927, *The Last Attraction*, 1929; *The Quiet Don*, 1931; *Paths of Enemies*, 1935; *Grain*, 1936; *Children of Taiga*, 1941.



*The Peasant Women of Ryazan*

## Pit of Loneliness (1951), Jacqueline Audry

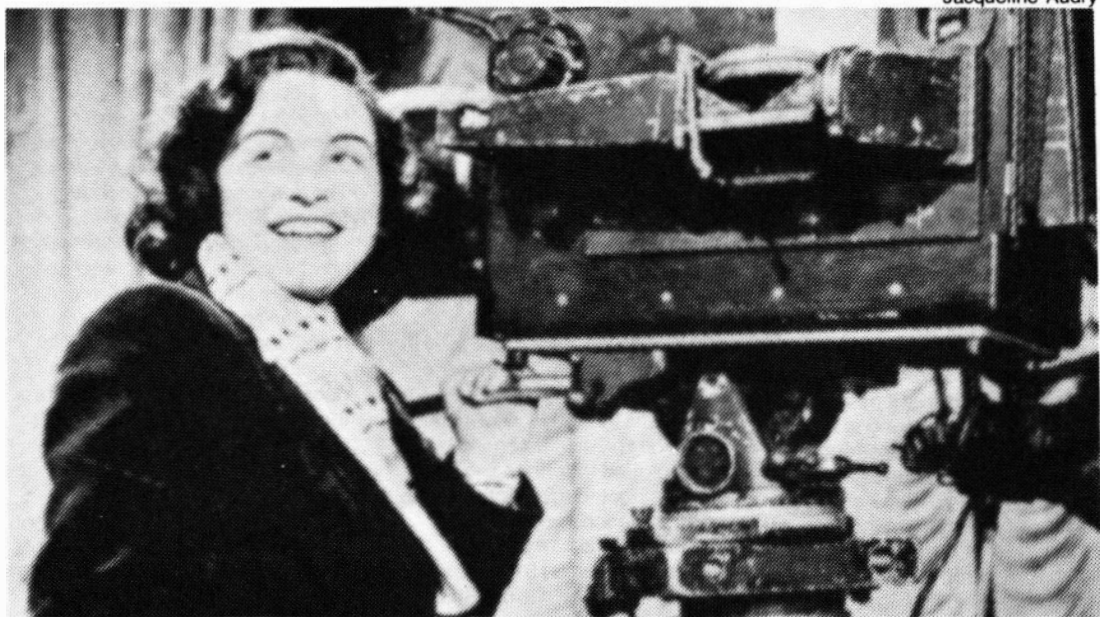
Distributor: Film Classics  
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*Pit of Loneliness* is the result of a remarkable collaboration between French director Jacqueline Audry and her sister, Colette, the novelist whose examinations of the problems of womanhood have earned her a major place in 20th-century French culture. Based on the English novel *Olivia*, the film is nominally the story of a young girl's coming-of-age at a French finishing school at the end of the 19th century. Under Audry's direction, however, the novel has been transformed into a sensitive examination of the corrosive and tragic effects of love among women.

Audry was treading on new ground in *Pit of Loneliness*. She was best known for the popular *Gigi* and *Minnie*, which treated girlhood in a sentimental and frivolous manner. Her muted confrontation with lesbianism in this film is a movement toward a serious, however oblique, treatment of problems which lay dormant in those earlier films.

Briefly, the film tells the story of the typical "schoolgirl crush" syndrome. Olivia, a shy English teen-ager, is sent off to boarding school in France. The school is housed in a beautiful old chateau and run by two remarkable women, Mlles. Julie and Cara. At school Olivia blossoms into a happy, giddy girl and joins her mates in their seemingly harmless rivalry for the attention and special affection of Mlle. Julie, the more commanding and beautiful of the two headmistresses. While the students are engaged in the pursuit of favors from their teachers, Julie and Cara are involved in their own, less frivolous courtship of the girls.

Mlle. Julie, played with elegant and painful decorum by Edwige Feuillere, realizes that her own interest in certain of the children is unnatural. Although she loves Olivia, who clearly worships her, she doesn't allow herself to make the relationship into an actual affair. Her concern for the girl's well-being keeps her from making any definite advances, but her instincts lead her into tempting Olivia ever further. We have little doubt, as Julie works her charm over the girl, that she could succeed should she decide to indulge her true feelings. Meanwhile, the school falls apart:



Julie is obsessed with Olivia, Cara retires to her room out of a sense of peevish jealousy and hurt, and the children take sides with one or the other of the mistresses as they watch their abortive and furtive courtships. Eventually Cara commits suicide, and Julie's grief at this event drives her away from the school, presumably forever. Olivia is left, shattered, to move into adulthood.

Love among women is clearly regarded here as corrosive and unnatural. The film is dated because nowhere in it is homosexuality treated as anything other than a terrible deviance, a secret sin to be suffered in silence. Julie has to sacrifice her feelings for her sense of moral righteousness; this division within creates a tension in the film that mirrors the tension between the innocent courtship rituals of the schoolgirls and the "darker" intentions of their mistresses. There are a number of ambiguities in the film which can only be attributed to directorial "decorum": there is no explicit sexuality, for one thing, and we never know exactly what the relationship between Julie and Cara has been in the past. Nor do we know at all times how conscious the girls are of the possible deeper meanings in their relations with each other and their teachers. In a sense, though, these ambiguities reflect the confused distortions in the nascent sexual perception that characterizes adolescence.

The film is by no means a depressing one. Much of it is graceful, even lighthearted; Audry

captures the excited, breathless quality of life in a girls' school. Indeed, this seeming fragility, this wistfulness, is the greatest means which moves the film toward its final comment: the banality and charm masks the doom awaiting the principals.

This is quite a chatty film; Bosley Crowther remarked on its "velvet innuendos," and the ending is somewhat lessened in power by the talkativeness of the characters. Nonetheless, the devastation of Julie is profoundly moving—never do we lose sympathy for her as we do for Cara, who tends toward a kind of kittenish femininity, and whose response to her own duality is to retreat, finally into death.

Although the director's attitude toward lesbianism is outdated by today's standards, her ironic presentation of the decadence abounding in this fin-de-siecle chateau is absolutely contemporary. As a "costume picture" alone Audry's film is a success. The photography and sound create a pastel world that is, on the surface, as innocent and charming as the petticoats the children wear. The supporting cast, especially Yvonne de Bray in her lightheaded Victorie, provides a human background that emanates gossip and cheap romance and pubescent ambiguity against which the pain of Mlle. Julie is played out.

Festival viewers will have an opportunity to compare *Pit of Loneliness* with Leontine Sagan's *Maedchen in Uniform* (German, 1931), a film that deals with similar subject matter. Although

Audry's film lacks the broad political implications of the German film, it contains greater depth of characterization and is, in its psychological subtlety, more sophisticated.

*Pit of Loneliness* is a very good film and a significant one in the history of women in films, for it is a general-audience feature that deals with a particularly controversial aspect of womanhood (and how much more controversial in 1951 than today), and it is written, directed and acted by women. These elements alone make it an important movie; the grace of its direction, the subtlety of its screenplay, and the conviction of its actresses make it a memorable one.

Patricia Cecchini

**PIT OF LONELINESS** 88 min.; France.

Director: Jacqueline Audry. Screenplay by Colette, from the anonymous English novel *Olivia* (1949). A Memnon Films production, released and distributed by Arthur Davis, New York. (Black and white).

FILMOGRAPHY *Les Chevaux du Voeurs*, 1943; *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, 1945; *Sombre dimanche*, 1948; *Gigi*, 1949; *Minnie*, 1950; *Pit of Loneliness* (*Olivia*), 1951; *La Caraque blonde*, 1952; *Huis clos*, 1954; *Mistou, ou comment l'esprit vient aux filles*, 1956; *La Gaconne*, 1957; *C'est la faute d'Adam*, 1958; *Ecole des cocottes* (*Six Easy Lessons*), 1959; *Le Secret du chevalier d'Eon*, 1960; *Les Petits matins* (*Girl on the Road*), 1962; *Cadavres en vacances*, 1963; *Fruits amers*, 1966; *Lis de mer*, 1970

Patricia M. Cecchini writes about film.

## Promised Lands (1974), Susan Sontag

Distributor: New Yorker Films

Susan Sontag was born in New York City on January 28, 1933. After New York, Sontag lived in Tucson, Los Angeles and Canoga Park, California. At the age of fifteen Sontag entered the University of California at Berkeley. She stayed for one year and then transferred to the University of Chicago, from which she graduated with a B.A. in philosophy in 1951.

While studying at the University of Chicago Sontag met and married Philip Rieff. In 1951 they left Chicago and moved to the Boston area, where she attended Radcliffe College/Harvard University and obtained an M.A. She also fulfilled all of her requirements for a Ph.D. except the completion of a dissertation. From 1957 to 1958 Sontag studied at the Sorbonne. In 1959 she was divorced from Rieff.

Sontag became the editor of **Commentary** for a brief period in 1959 but soon returned to academia. She taught at the City College of New York for one year, Sarah Lawrence College for a year and Columbia University for four years.

"When I was a child, I wanted to

be a chemist," Sontag has said. "I had been writing essays, stories, poems, and plays since I was about eight, but I had never taken my writing very seriously. I began writing in earnest, after years of involvement with a number of academic and scholarly subjects, when I was twenty-eight." She began working on **The Benefactor**, a novel, which was published in 1963. She also began to write essays and literary criticism for magazines. Sontag has published two collections of essays, **Against Interpretation** (1966) and **Styles of Radical Will** (1969), as well as a second novel, entitled **Death Kit**.

Sontag has said that the cinema "is the most alive, the most exciting, the most important of all art forms." She has participated in the Venice Film Festival and the New York Film Festival. **Duet for Cannibals**, a film written and directed by Sontag, was shown at the New York Film Festival in 1969. In 1971 she directed her second film, **Brother Carl**.

In an essay entitled "A Note on Novels and Film" Sontag reveals some thoughts on the interconnectedness of these two creative forms. She begins by discussing the similarities of the two arts while stating that the "cinema has its own methods and logic of

representation . . . (it) presents us with a new language, a way of talking about emotion through the direct experience of the language of faces and gestures." Both the cinema and the novel present the audience with a controlled view. The director and the novelist have dictated exactly what one is to see. The audience is led from one absolute point to the next. The novel and the cinema also share the dominant tradition of the unfolding plot/idea which employs highly individuated characters located in a precise social setting." Sontag goes on to say that "cinema is a kind of pan-art . . . It can use, incorporate, engulf virtually any other art. All the trappings of melodrama and high emotion may be found in the most recent sophisticated cinema, while these have been banished from most recent sophisticated novels."

**Promised Lands** is a film about a recent war; it is also a film about the memory of war. The film was shot over a period of five weeks late in 1973. It was shot along the Suez Canal, on the battlefields in the Golan Heights, on the Sinai Desert and on the Gaza Strip.

The film pictures a mental landscape as well as a physical one. Grief is seen in the families of slain soldiers attending a mass

burial; the image of grief is also within every frame of footage showing collapsed homes and street rubble. In an interview with an Israeli writer the subject of "rights" is continually discussed. "The Palestinians have every right to this country," he says. "The Jews have every right, too. And what is it when one right is opposed to another right? A tragedy."

When she began this film, Sontag wanted to make it with "as much care as a fiction film. In making fiction films, I could construct a script, coach actors, and execute what was already written down. But here, events were happening first and then being written down and constructed into a script later. Reality was something you didn't invent. You ran after it tripping—because you were lugging a heavy tripod. Being rather tuned into sadness, to the tears in things, I put a lot of that into **Promised Lands**. It's not just in my head. It's what Israel does seem to me, at this moment, to be about."

The film is filled with images of varying levels of life from an old woman chasing away a goat to mummified bodies of unburied soldiers strewn across the landscape. A writer asks, "Who needs this desert? What is it?" He answers his own question. "Sand. And so much blood."

Tanya Ackason

Credits for PROMISED LANDS

Director—Susan Sontag

Camera—Jeri Sapanen

Sound—Gary Alper

Assistant Director—David Rieff

Editing—Annie Chevallay

Florence Bocquet

Production Manager—

Monique Montivier

Assistant to the Producer—

Bonni McCrea

Producer—Nicole Stephane

Associate Producers—Nadine Hain

Alex Massis

Running Time: 87 minutes

(also 55-minute version)

France, 1974. Color, In English.

Tanya Ackason is an assistant editor for Triad Magazine. She is living and writing in Chicago.



Susan Sontag



# Sambizanga (1972), Sarah Maldoror

Distributor: New Yorker Films

*Sambizanga* is not only the first feature-length film completed by Sarah Maldoror but also the first feature-length film to chronicle the story of one of the remaining outposts of colonialism and suppression in modern Africa. The title *Sambizanga* is the name of one of the poor suburbs of Luanda, capital of Angola, a country on the west coast of Africa which has been occupied more or less continuously by Portugal since 1575. Angola has a population of five million blacks ruled by a half a million whites. The film uses a fictional framework, the touching story of a husband and wife, to depict the events leading up to the first rebellion against colonial rule, the storming of the Luanda prison on February 4, 1961. Although the film ends on the hopeful historical note of the preparations for the uprising, a note which is meant to give impetus to the guerilla forces fighting in Angola at the same time that it makes the facts of Angola known to the outside world, the events which followed the uprising were not hopeful.

From February to the end of 1961, 1,200 Portuguese and 50,000 Africans died in the struggle, and 128,000 Africans fled to the Congo. This film itself could not be shot in Angola and was instead shot outside of Brazzaville with the assistance of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), one of whose

actual leaders, Mario de Andrade, is Sarah Maldoror's husband. The fight for liberation was complicated in 1967 by the Gulf Oil Company's discovery of offshore oil deposits; during 1967 Portugal sent an additional 120,000 men to suppress the guerillas. At the writing of this article negotiations are under way between the new government of Portugal and the Portuguese liberation movements, who, it is hoped, will find a way to end one of the worst colonial regimes in Africa.

*Sambizanga* is not, however, just another political tract. Maldoror does believe that it is the duty of African filmmakers to place themselves at the service of those parts of Africa that are still colonized, but she also believes that the best way to interest people is to tell them a story. Thus, even though the film was made with the advice of the MPLA and reflects their views, it is not only a political statement. The film script for *Sambizanga* was written by Maurice Pons and modified during the shooting, and additional script credit is given to Sarah Maldoror's husband. The story is loosely based on the novel *The True Life of Domingos Xavier* written by Luandino Vieira (who also wrote the novel that formed the basis for Maldoror's first film, a short entitled *Monangambee*). This author, Luandina Vieira, now lives under surveillance in Angola, after spending several years in a concentration camp in Tarrafa in the Cape Verde Islands. The actors are all non-professionals. Maldoror

found the hero, a tractor driver, by chance. Elisa de Andrade, the female lead, is in real life an economist who lives in Algeria. She also played in *Monangambee*.

The film was shot in seven weeks in Brazzaville and edited in Paris in six weeks. The crew and much of the financing was French. As Maldoror says about the French financing of the film, "I take money where I can find it. Since African countries have not done what Algeria and Guinea have, since they haven't nationalized the distribution, we are forced to take money where it is. The important thing for the moment is to make films, even with the devil's money."

Because she did have adequate financing and an experienced French crew, the film has a professional look and an assured tone which are not always present in third-world films where compromises have to be made because of lack of funds. As Maldoror says, "There is no reason for black filmmakers to create a cinema which does not have the same technical quality as the cinema created by whites. Technique must be given to everyone. If the technical weakness of one or another African film is explained by a weakness in the budget (attributable to the neocolonial pillage by France), there is no reason always to make a virtue out of necessity."

In *Sambizanga* the fictional story is closely interwoven with the didactic import of the film; the individual and the group interact.

And what is more unusual in a film of a political nature, the characters are not symbols of larger forces but people in their own right. Maldoror begins by carefully depicting the life of the two main characters in the film, the husband and wife. Their relationship and the position of the woman in African society are portrayed through simple scenes of family life. This life is suddenly interrupted when the husband is arrested and taken to prison. From this point on the film takes on a three-part structure, the search of the wife, Maria, for the husband, the search of the militant group for the husband and the torture of the husband in prison because he refuses to reveal the name of the white construction boss who is involved in the underground movement. The wife's journey to Luanda for news of her husband is not just a journey through space: for her it is also a journey to political awareness.

Maria, like most African women, had no knowledge of her husband's political activities. Her trip to Luanda is an exploration of the political situation in Angola. The lines are not drawn along race but rather along class. The African officials whom she meets are just as corrupt as the white ones. And there are whites who have joined the guerilla movement. Political theory is introduced obliquely in her story, as with the tailor who teaches Marxism as he works at his trade. Even the cinematography develops the themes of her search. Maria is often shot with a telephoto lens which flattens the background behind her and has the added effect of making her trip seem longer. Motion is extended through the use of this lens, and it seems that people travel much longer to reach a goal. Maldoror is not saying that the transformation into a political awareness is an easy or quick achievement. The end of the film is only a beginning for Maria; by the end of the film she has knowledge. The next step is action, action which is, in a sense, assured by our knowledge of future events in Angola. We can look forward from the end of the film to see her among those who participated in the February 4th storming of the Luanda prison.

This look towards the future helps mitigate the intercutting of the parallel events of the torturing of her husband, Domingos, by the Portuguese and the attempts of the militants to find him. The graphic scenes of torture serve a dual function. First they bring home the effects of colonial rule on a personal level. Because we care about Domingos and Maria, showing the torture is even more horrible than a mere recitation of the events. The torture scenes also contrast sharply with the early scenes of the couple's life together, just as the prison stands in contrast to the scenes of African daily life. These contrasts form an integral part of the film and present not only the colonized Africa that still exists but also the continent's rich heritage and possibilities for human development. The militants' search for Domingos shows the possibility and the promise of group action as opposed to an individual's attempt to combat the system. It is in the group and the continuity of the group that hope lies. Thus the movement at the end of the film is towards a group action: we see the reaction of Domingos' fellow prisoners to his bloody corpse and the actions of the militants at the



*Sambizanga*



Saturday night social, which is a cover for their political activities. Hope for the future lies in the development of a militant consciousness and most especially through the development of this consciousness in a particularly African way.

In *Sambizanga* Sarah Maldoror draws heavily on her own observations of African life. "I did not invent anything. Everything that I show is inspired by the reality that I have observed." Even the rhythm of the film is particularly African. "Concerning the rhythm of the film, I tried to restore the characteristic slowness of life in Africa." The film is also full of examples of the strain between tradition and the pressures of modern life and the readjustments that will have to be made before a larger revolution in human values is successful.

Sarah Maldoror was not born in Africa. She is originally from Guadeloupe, and her real name is Ducados. The name Maldoror seems to be adopted from the book of that title, *Chant de Maldoror*, written in 1869 by Lautreamont (whose real name, Ducasse, is surprisingly close to Sarah Maldoror's real name). Lautreamont also came to France from the "new world," as he was born in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Maldoror was a member of an African dance troupe in Paris, went to learn filmmaking in Moscow, and shot her first short film, *Monangambee*, in Algeria. This film, the title of which means "porter," deals with a small act of elementary incomprehension between the Portuguese and the Africans. *Monangambee* won the grand prize at the Festival of Dinard

and the International Critics' Award at Carthage. Maldoror started to make but did not finish a second film with elements of the Algerian army. In France she made the 16mm short *Saint-Denis sur avenir* and participated in the collective film *Louise Michel, La Commune et nous*. She was also assistant to Gillo Pontecorvo in *The Battle of Algiers*.

Maldoror greatly admires the Japanese cinema, especially the style of a film like *The Seven Samurai*. Because of her training she is, of course, also greatly influenced by the classics of the Soviet cinema. Thus, *Sambizanga* has a relatively traditional style, beautiful photography and excellent acting and also deals with a revolutionary subject matter. The film brings to us all not only an awareness of the particular situation in an African country but also a new understanding of problems which all people face.

Sharon Russell

**SAMBIZANGA** Director: Sarah Maldoror. Screenplay: Mario de Andrade, Maurice Pons, Sarah Maldoror, based on the novel *The True Life of Domingos Xavier* by Luandino Vieira. Cinematographer: Claude Agostini. Technical Consultant: Jacques Poitrenaud. Producer: Isabelle-Films, Paris. (France/Congo), 1972.

Sharon Russell is finishing her Ph.D. in film at Northwestern University. She received a B.A. in English from Bryn Mawr College. She also writes program notes for the Film Center at the Art Institute.

## A Very Curious Girl (1969), Nelly Kaplan

Distributor:  
Universal Pictures

Pablo Picasso said of *A Very Curious Girl*, "This is insolence raised to the status of a fine art." With that epigram he attempted to capture the singular quality which comes through in interviews with Nelly Kaplan as well as in her films. I could call that quality *style*, but that word is too effeminate; *balls*, but the word is definitely ludicrous—and sexist. Nelly Kaplan has the same pleasurable abrasive honesty which enables Esther Greenwood in Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* to look at a man's nude crotch for the first time and observe privately. "The only thing I could think of was turkey neck and gizzards. . . ."

Kaplan and her work are a delight and inspiration to feminists, and she is not merely a figment of feminist critics' imaginations: Kaplan herself is an outspoken feminist as this exchange with Kay Harris shows:

Harris: "Revenge is necessary," you said at your press conference; "It is necessary to take revenge against one's oppressors in order to grow and continue your life." . . . Kaplan: When you have a weapon stuck in your body and cannot take it away, the wound will never heal. With women it is the same thing. They have been wounded for over 40,000 years. To take possession of their strength again, they must have revenge. . . . I believe that to take back dignity you have to take revenge (*Women and Film*).

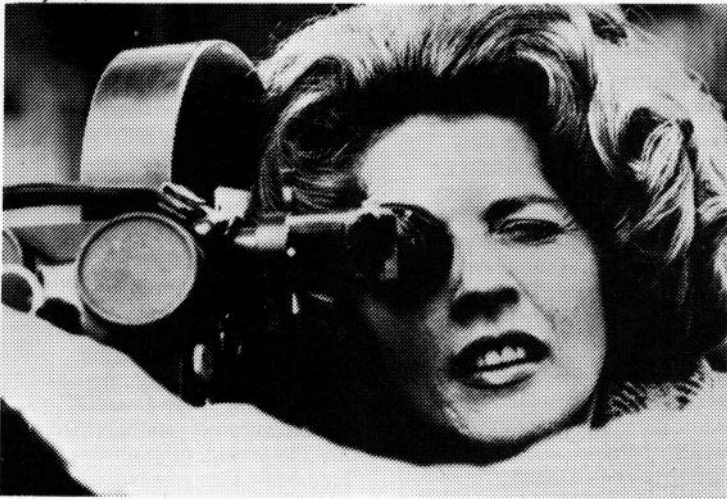
The revenge of oppressed women is a prevalent motif in Kaplan's films. "I like those who, having been humiliated and offended, revolt against their tormentors. I don't hold with turning the other cheek" (Kaplan in *Le Monde* as quoted by Herman Weinberg in *Take One*). The original French title of *A Very Curious Girl* is *La Fiancée du pirate*, *The Pirate's Fiancee*, which refers to Pirate Jenny's fantasy-of-revenge song in Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*. Kaplan's first feature, *A Very Curious Girl* is the sardonically comic tale of how Marie, a bastard outcast in a small provincial town, becomes a prostitute and takes the perfect revenge upon her exploiters by exploiting them in their own terms, sexual and economic. "The important thing is to keep away the sentiment of sin, the sentiment of punishment that every film made by men wanted to tell us about: whores

have to be thrown away by society, or have to repent! I wanted to tell the story of a whore who doesn't repent, and is very happy, and goes away, and begins to become free" (Kaplan in interview with Barbara Halpern Martineau, *Notes on Women's Cinema*).

*A Very Curious Girl* made history by being the first film to contain a scene which begins with a man's attempting to assault a woman and ends with his writhing on the floor in pain, defeated, instead of with his successfully completing the assault, as in most commercial feature films. When a vicious, armed customer attempts to attack her, Marie responds sensibly and naturally—she gives him a good, hard kick in the balls. Paralyzed by the pain, her would-be attacker becomes her victim. *A Very Curious Girl* is a terrific feminist film: you come out of it with a murderous gleam in your eye and your body tensed to deliver a karate chop to the groin of the first man who dares to mess with you.

If *A Very Curious Girl* had a subtitle, it would have to be "sexual politics." That Marie exploits her exploiters—that she fights sexual politics with sexual politics—is both the film's strength and its weakness. As a feminist fantasy, the film is tremendously effective because it satisfies a nearly boundless, well-justified vindictiveness which many women feel towards men. But the film does not satisfy a greater, finer and less frequently recognized need—the need for a really revolutionary film, one which would present human beings of both sexes and all sexual styles working together toward a common goal in a manner that is cooperative, noncompetitive and nonexploitative. Because of its satiric elements *A Very Curious Girl* cannot free itself from the sick social roles that it satirizes: the fact that it satirizes binds it to the subject it satirizes; the satire wouldn't be intelligible if the satirized object weren't recognizable. The film does not imagine any new human possibilities but remains tied to the power relationships which it exposes as corrupt and as defeatable on their own exploitative terms.

That *A Very Curious Girl* stays within the bounds of exploitation—the comic exploitation of exploitation—is the source of my attraction to it and also of my skepticism about it. It is the ultimate fantasy before the truly positive revolutionary film, the fantasy of wiping out exploitation with a lethal dose of its own



medicine. It hits only the petty exploiters, not the really big people behind an exploitative system—like arresting students for possession of a lid of dope instead of the big dealers who make the profits.

Frequently critics have called the film a fantasy, which is valid because it presents the machinery of a revenge which is more perfect than it could be in real life. The film also has what people have called "surrealistic" elements. It is fantastic and surrealistic in that it portrays one lone woman's revenge against an entire townspeople. Furthermore, it presents men as totally subject to their sexual urges. As much as every townsman adores his wallet, he gives it up to Marie without a murmur when doing so buys him the chance to sleep with her.

Brenda Roman (*in Women and Film*) has noted that *A Very Curious Girl* is not particularly cinematic and could easily be adapted to the stage. Indeed, the film is full of dramatic rather than cinematic rhetorical devices—for example, the presentation of the machinery of revenge itself. Apparently so primitive that she can't understand the workings of the tape recorder she bought earlier, Marie manages to use the tape recorder to execute her brilliant retaliation against the villagers. Because Kaplan repeatedly shows us scenes of Marie fumbling blindly with the tape recorder, we are unprepared for the coup in which Marie craftily exposes the townspeople by publicly playing recordings of their voices made at some of their most embarrassing moments. The audience has no more inkling of what Marie is planning than do her victims, the villagers, until Marie actually springs the scheme on them. The

revenge scheme comes as a nearly complete surprise and as a great delight to us also because Kaplan gives us almost no insight beforehand into Marie's mental processes—feelings, judgments, designs. This fact is another source of the reputed surrealism or fantastic quality of the film.

Nelly Kaplan is something of a self-made woman. "Since the age of six I've been raising hell. They told me not to rock the boat but I can't help confronting tabus" (Kaplan in *Le Monde* as quoted by Herman Weinberg in *Take One*). She was born in 1934 in Buenos Aires. For three generations her family, originally Russian immigrants, had been in Argentina, which Kaplan calls "a society of machismo" (Kaplan in Harris interview). For a while she studied economics at the University of Buenos Aires and then quit to study film in Paris, where she supported herself by menial jobs and by writing articles on film for Argentine papers. "It was a scandal in my family. I was quite a brilliant writer and very crazy. I was 18 and left by boat third class. My family objected. I sold articles on film to an Argentine film magazine to obtain money to go away. I was very exultant" (Kaplan in Harris interview).

In 1954 Kaplan met Abel Gance, whom she describes as "one of the most important filmmakers in France. In 1926 he invented the triple screen which later became Cinerama" (quoted by Dora Kaplan in *Women in Film*). Gance gave Kaplan a job as assistant on the film *La Tour de Nesle* (*Tower of Nesle*). She became his apprentice and assistant in the shooting and editing of *Magirama* (1956), his triple-screen film, and then collaborated with him on *Austerlitz* and *Cyrano et d'Artagnan*. While she worked with

Gance, Kaplan published a book on *Magirama* called *Le Manifest d'un art nouveau* (*Manifesto on a New Art*) and another called *Le Sunlight d'Austerlitz* (*Sunlight at Austerlitz*). At that time she also published a collection of erotic short stories, *Le Reservoir des sens* (*Reservoir of the Senses*), under the pseudonym *Belen*.

Since 1961 Kaplan has directed a series of acclaimed documentary films on art, including *Gustave Moreau* (1963), *Rodolphe Bresdin* (1965), *Dessins et merveilles* (*Drawings and Marvels*, on drawings by Victor Hugo, 1966); *Abel Gance: Hier et demain* (*Abel Gance: Yesterday and Tomorrow*, 1963), *Les Annees 25* (*The 25 Years*, 1966), and *A la Source, la femme aimee* (*To the Source of the Loved Woman*, 1966 or 68). This last film, the subject of which was the erotic drawings from the secret notebooks of painter Andre Masson, was mutilated and banned by the French censors.

In 1967, during the retrospective organized for Picasso's 85th birthday, Kaplan presented *Le Regard Picasso* (*Eye of Picasso*), a one-hour, color feature based on his drawings, which later won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. In collaboration with Claude Makovsky, Kaplan wrote the script for *A Very Curious Girl* in 1968. In 1971 she completed her second feature, *Papa les p'tits bateaux*, "a superb parody of every detective story ever written and a demystification of the gangster hero" (Toronto Women's Film Festival booklet). Of *Papa* Kaplan has said: In *Papa* I wanted to make a cartoon, to joke against the male way of showing gangsters as "things of beauty." I wanted to show them as the little men they maybe: stupid and ugly, thinking that nobody can be stronger and more "macho" than them. But one little girl arrives and even she can be stronger and more clever than them, making fun of their virility. She understands that to survive she has to learn certain things very quickly, and to profit from their prejudices and their stupid vacuity (interview with Barbara Halpern Martineau in *Notes on Women's Cinema*).

In 1973 Kaplan was the honored guest at the National Film Theatre in London, where she revealed that she was trying to raise money for three more features. She speaks of them to Barbara Halpern Martineau: One is called *The Pleasure Party*. It's about a very

young girl, of twenty, in Paris, who becomes pregnant, and needs an abortion—it's a very forbidden thing—you go to jail . . . of course if you have money, then you go to London. . . . So all these things happen to her during one week trying to obtain the abortion. . . . You know, it cannot be a funny film—it's too dramatic, but in the way things happen it's a comedy, the way she has to fight against people until she finds a way to obtain an abortion. I have problems with the producers. They say abortion is not a real problem, not a real subject. . . .

The second film is called *The Phallocrat*—it means the man who rules by the phallus, you know, like aristocrat. It's the story of a very rich, powerful man who has money, a wife, and two daughters. He's the dictator of this family, and he makes life impossible until once upon a day the women decide that too much is too much. Little by little they make such a mess that it puts everything upside-down; and at the end of the film the phallocrat is no longer a phallocrat.

The third, called *The Necklace of Ptyx*, is a quite fantastic plot, full of sound and fury, the story of a woman who has a very impressive power to interfere with reality and change it, a man who is in love with her, all his adventures to deserve her, a marvelous black cat, many awful people running after all of them. . . . I like the subject very much.

As of 1972 Kaplan was also working on another book, *Un Manteau de fou-rire ou les memoires d'une liseuse de draps* (*A Cloak of Mad Laughter or the Memoirs of a Sheet-Reader*).

As I began with Picasso on Kaplan, so I will close with a few more words by Nelly Kaplan, words on, and addressed to, us: "Poetesses, to your lutes! Witches, to your broomsticks! For an androgynous creation, sweet or bitter but violent! There is genius in the veins of women (I have seen it), and it flows in full tide, but underground" ("A Nous l'histoire d'une de nos folies," *Images et sons*, April 1974, trans. by Barbara Halpern Martineau).

Linda Greene

*A VERY CURIOUS GIRL* Director: Nelly Kaplan, Producer: Claude Makovsky, Screenplay: Nelly Kaplan and Claude Makovsky, Cinematography: Jean Badel, Music: Georges Moustaki, Running time: 107 minutes. France, 1969.



# Chicago Women in Film

## Filmmaking in Chicago

Because a call has gone out in Chicago and all over the midwest for women to submit their films to this festival, the discussion here of Chicago and midwestern filmmakers does not include a description of all the films made here. Also many women not mentioned here are working in film and video in the Chicago area. We will probably all meet each other for the first time at FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74.

Women are working with film and video in Chicago in many ways. Locally, there are professional filmmakers making films for specific purposes and specific audiences, socially oriented filmmakers stimulating a political analysis of certain issues, and experimental and personal filmmakers making works of personal expression and showing the potentialities of the media in a new way. Similarly, video being done by women here ranges from documentary tapes made for a particular audience to works of fiction to tapes that are pure abstractions.

Royanne Rosenberg is one of Chicago's woman filmmakers. What is a filmmaker? Royanne's definition: "A filmmaker is someone who makes films, someone who conceives and holds the vision, who shoots and edits their own films, someone who licks the emulsion. There are not many around. The industry is not conducive to filmmakers. Royanne has made two films: *The Autopsy* and *Roseland*."

Some people don't like to watch *The Autopsy*. It's just that: an autopsy, but photographed softly, gently, eerily. The experimental

techniques used include fogged film, a fog filter and rephotographing frames, and they soften the impact of what is seen so it is difficult to be sure just what is going on. *Roseland* includes a silent section of Rose, a rather large woman, surrounded by her children and delivering a baby. Most of the film, however, consists of Rose, an unmarried welfare mother, sitting in her home in a housing project and talking into the camera about herself and her life. It's an experimental documentary, one which does not objectify Rose, does not make her an object of sympathy or disgust, but instead invites identification with her. *Roseland* is available from *Vision Quest*.

Millie Goldsholl is a woman who has been working in professional filmmaking here for fifteen years. With her husband she runs a firm for making industrial, educational and television films. In 1958 the Goldsholls' first film won a prize in the Brussels experimental film festival, and since then Millie Goldsholl has done work in all aspects of filmmaking—research, writing, directing and editing. Her favorite film is *Up Is Down* (distributed by Pyramid films), which is about a small boy who walks on his hands and has his own special way of seeing the world until he is submitted to "therapy" to see things just like everyone else.

Also making films commercially are Pat Barey and Gloria Callaci, who together have made several films for public television. *Until I Die* is their award-winning documentary on Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who sums up in the film her research on the stages of dying. In the film there is a ten-minute interview between Dr. Kubler-Ross and a dying patient

and illustrations of Kubler-Ross' accounts of dying patients, including dying children. This half-hour film is distributed by the American Journal of Nursing, as is Pat Barey's *And Baby Makes Two*, about a single parent with an adopted child. Another socially oriented documentary which the two women made is *To Be Free: Jane Kennedy*, a film about a forty-five-year-old nurse who burned draft records and destroyed memory banks at the Dow Chemical Company as a protest against the Vietnam war. She served 18 months of one prison sentence, then participated in the making of this film, and now has been sent back to prison to serve a second sentence. The film is distributed by the AV Center, Indiana University. Gloria Callaci is now working commercially for Dick Cusak Productions, while Pat Barey has recently done a series of three films on ecology for Channel 11. Barey is trying to get away from a standard documentary format and is moving into a freer form where images collide and accumulate. In this series the film *Wheelies* gives an impressionistic picture of cars and their impact on the ecology with no narration necessary in the film.

Dede Walsh has made a film, *Sykes*, about a blind piano player who works at Otto's German Garden on Halsted and lives in the senior citizen's house across the street. According to Sykes, one of the reasons he made the film was to tell about the hole in the sidewalk in front of their house, and Walsh lets us see the problem as well. This film is distributed by Coronet and was also edited by a woman, Barbara Kaplan.

Mary Ann Childers, who works for WGN, has made a film of her

own, *Any Empty Spaces*. This is a visual study of Bud Beyers' mime classes at Northwestern University. This mime troupe also starred in a recent experimental film by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, entitled *Pentethsilea/Amazon*.

Women whose primary commitment is to socially committed filmmaking include the women working with the Kartemquin collective, described below. A film on ERA has been made by Betty Schall at the University of Illinois, Circle Campus. Important to women has been the film *Lavender* (distributed by Periennial Education), made in 1972 by Coleen Monahan and Elaine Jacobs. This film was the first that I know of in the United States to give a portrait of the normal everyday life of two lesbian lovers. Like many other films which have come out of the women's movement, it is a biographical sketch that serves a political function as it raises consciousness about the reality of women's lives. Monahan is now doing free lance sound work and Jacobs is an audio engineer doing slide film productions. For their next project the women would like to do a film on transsexuals.

Women making personal and experimental films include Royanne Rosenberg and other women who have worked independently in this area, whose work is described below. Diane Rock Janus won a traveling fellowship in 1971 from the Art Institute, and her short films include *Narcissia*, a personal exploration in an experimental form, *Retaining Valve*, a psychological drama, and *Experience in Learning*, an educational portrait of the School of the Art Institute. Gail Willert's film *Funny Girl* is a short film composed of women's images, and was shown this year at the Ann Arbor Women's Film Festival.

Because of the inexpensive format and the portability of the camera, a number of women are making independent films in 8mm or Super 8. Shirley Erbacher has been working in this area for a long time, and more recently Rebecca Hunter, who works professionally making educational behavioral training films, has used the Super 8 medium to make *Rock Top*, an experimental film portrait of a woman. Earlier this year, Shirley Erbacher had a retrospective of her works at N.A.M.E. Gallery, which has had a number of shows of women's experimental works. There are a number of women's



Kathy Schubert



*Roseland*

groups devoted exclusively to video. These women see video as an unique medium with its own potentialities different from film. (To illustrate the difference, this year Shirley Clarke has been presenting a program called *Videospace* where people in different areas act simultaneously to contribute to a single program and are reinforced by feedback of their own performance.) The group Videopolis, in which Judy Hoffman, Anda Korsts, Laura McLaughlin and Mary Newman are working, is primarily committed to community-action video. This group has made a collection of women's tapes from all over the country, presented the Festival last year at Circle Campus and the YWCA, and is running the video section of the Chicago festival now. Kay Kandrac has made personal tapes out of her store, Armitage Software. Lilly Ollinger, who formerly worked with Videopolis, is now doing video with Alternatives, a free school, where she is finding new ways to utilize video within a school curriculum. Susan Prescott has done educational video on the staff of Governor's State University. And Lynn Blumenthal does video documentaries of artists.

Women at Columbia College, the School of the Art Institute and other colleges have made films as part of their curriculum. In the high schools there is also an active interest in film, and a number of high school women are making films to enter in *Films by Women/Chicago '74*. The Community Film Workshop operates in Chicago to give minorities a breakthrough in filmmaking. In the past few years a number of women who have learned filmmaking at the Workshop have gone on to make prize-winning films and enter careers in the film industry. One of these is Oshoon Mugwana. Mugwana directed a short film, *Jive*, which won a prize at the Chicago Film Festival, and currently she is an editor at Channel 7.

Julia Lesage

Julia Lesage teaches film and literature in the English department at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus. She is working on her Ph.D. in comparative literature at Indiana University. She is also a contributing editor of *Jump Cut* and *Cineaste* as well as an active participant in the women's movement.

## Chicago Women and The Personal Film

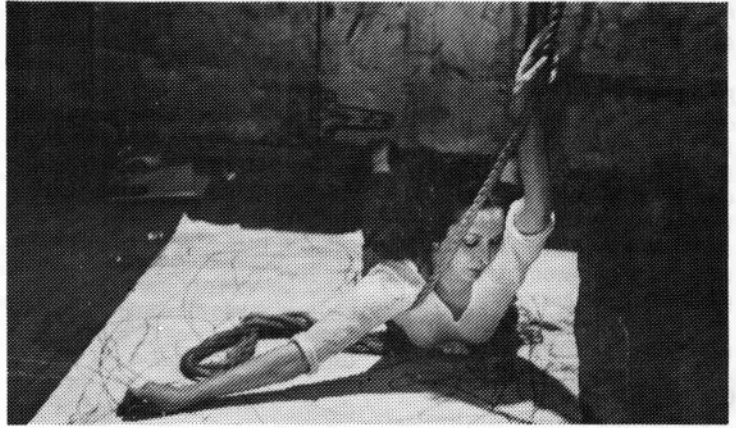
Of the women working in film in Chicago, some have chosen to approach film solely and exclusively as an art form. The art of personal film differs from most other film in that it seldom involves the kind of group effort associated with making a film, particularly a feature. Most films owe their existence not only to the director and writer but also to the camera operator, the sound person, the editor and a number of other technicians, many of whom exert some degree of creative influence over the outcome. The personal film artist may perform all of these functions herself (or himself), from the conception of the idea to directing, operating the camera, controlling the lighting, recording the sound and editing. The resulting film is totally controlled and executed by the person who conceived it. The film artist is dedicated only to developing her (his) ideas in ways unique to film alone and does not necessarily have any regard for conventional usage in any aspect of the medium. The film artist has the freedom to put the motive of pleasing herself above all other motives.

The works of the Chicago women discussed in this article cannot be described in terms of a movement or a style or a "school." They differ greatly from each other in form and emphasis, and even when they fall into a similar genre, are notably dissimilar.

The inclination to use some direct aspect of oneself in one's own films is dominant for many personal filmmakers. Diana Barry has made several of a continuing series of diary films, *Dear Diary*, shot at sporadic intervals in her life and each encompassing a day. Each is composed of brief, mobile shots, often exposing the textures and light patterns of the objects she touches or passes, not at all in the nature of documentary but more an emotional, sensory record. The audience sees the fragments of the day as she sees them, sees her as she sees herself, in a reflection on a car, a sidewalk shadow, in a mirror.

Although very new to filmmaking, Frances Burton has produced a twenty-minute film of considerable strength, also in the diary format, covering her own activities from *March 13 to March 20* (which is the title). She is camera operator in absentia, letting the camera run while she participates in the events being recorded.

Carolee Schneeman © Peter Moore



Simple actions are transformed with a feeling of drama, and the lovers, neighbors and friends who occasionally appear seem to be acting fictional roles, although paradoxically you are quite aware that it is not fiction but reality.

The films of Barbara Scharres are concerned with the self as body and presence and the scale and form of the body are compared to other things and beings, especially in *Self Portrait*. The slight line between animate and inanimate, between landscape and living animal body is examined in both *Handstrings* and *A Working Progress*. The films have faint sexual overtones but are not erotic; they do not avoid the sexuality of the body but confront more than entice. Her film *Arrows* is a subtle sexual comedy which makes use of unabashed male nudity.

Shirley Erbacher has worked in film for many years; she works exclusively in 8mm by choice. Her films are brief but compact poetic statements and use imagery from her home and immediate surroundings. They include film portraits of her children *Kyle* and *Dawn*, at different stages of their childhood. Her most recent series of numbered dance films in part develop a theme of death.

Bonnie Donahue, animator and teacher of animation, received an American Film Institute grant to make her film *Fly Bites*, which she describes as follows: "*Fly Bites* was treated much like a scroll—the tonal scale is entirely in the mid-range; the dominant value is middle grey, the colors are tonally in the middle, the transitions from black and white (grey) to color are handled by gradual blending. The sound track is composed of repetitive rhythms, the movements of the people are similarly deliberate and evenly paced; there is no conscious attempt at "drama," that is, there is

no attempt to startle or shock or surprise by sudden activity. The action of the film is more circular than linear, as a scroll attached end to end; the space created by the film is more related to the inner space of dreams than to the exterior space of light and shadow."

One of Bonnie's students, Barbara Stafford, has completed two animated films and has two more in progress. They are made from simple line drawings, use minimal color and deal with humorous characters. One follows an obese teen applying cosmetics; the second, a morning scene at home, the inhabitant awakened by a pet cat.

The wedding of film and sculpture into a cohesive piece is a formidable undertaking. Ruth Klassen constructs her own three-dimensional screens of satin and plastic and is beginning one of metal discs. She makes her films specifically to be shown on these screens. The films consist mainly of animated segments combined with found footage.

These women represent only a small portion of the women making personal films not only in Chicago but everywhere in the country. Many of them are rarely seen and many are not even in distribution, but they exist nevertheless as a body of work which testifies to the intelligence, the persistence and strength of women as film artists.

For distribution information on the above mentioned films contact Center Cinema Co-op, c/o School of the Art Institute, Michigan at Adams, Chicago, Ill. 60603 (phone 312-236-1519).

Barbara Scharres

Barbara Scharres is a filmmaker, itinerant projectionist and manager of Center Cinema Co-op.

## Chicago's Professional Women in Film

It may be news to some of you who attend the flicks at the theaters and schools and art museums that Chicago is a major producer of motion pictures. No, not features or even short subjects, but Chicago is a major center for the production of industrial, educational and commercial films. And each year Chicago women contribute a larger portion of the talent that produces these films.

Women have risen from the "go-for-coffee" jobs to become decision-makers and idea-contributors in the film industry. More important even is the trend toward independence. Chicago women in film no longer see a staff job in an already established studio as their only chance to work in the industry, but they are striking out on their own and forming their own companies, thus exerting more creative control than ever. Examples of women owning successful film companies include producers, directors, animators, editors and conformers. And some of these women combine these talents with others, as you will see in the following paragraphs, which list many of Chicago's professional women in film.

Producers owning their own companies are: Sue Sager of People Reaching Productions, Phyllis Abboud of Chicago Audiovisual Services, Myrna Ravitz of Cinepac, Joan Beugen of The Creative Establishment. Free-lance producers include: Donna Johnson, Royanne Rosenberg, June Finfer, Deirdre Walsh and Trudy Erickson.

There is a number of women directors in Chicago. Jackie Rivett, doing business as Lifestyle Productions, is both a director and producer. Free-lance directors include Karen Boyer and Anna Lena Keating as well as most of the free-lance producers above doing some directing.

Women have been assistant directors for many years with various other duties and/or titles imposed. For instance, Jerrie Fowler (also a very skilled editor), Judy Reiser Eisenbach, Sioux Oehler, Gail Sikevitz and Dru Carlson are all working as free-lance AD's.

Women have found the greatest acceptance as editors—if their great number is any sign. Free-lance editors include Debbie

Durkin, Carol Cross, Treva Bachand, Dixie Carter and Jerrie Fowler. Barbara Kaplan is in business for herself. Sedelmaier staffers include Peggy DeLay as editor and Carol Eastman as assistant editor. Topel & Associates has Beverly Baroff on staff as an assistant editor. NBC has several women in both full editor and assistant editor positions. Two women editors have formed their own companies: Kathy Schubert heads up My Sister's Cutting Room with free-lance assistant Susan Haken, and Brita Paretzkin works alone under the name First Cut. Negative conformers also have their own businesses, like Joyce Polly and Lucille Peak. Marge Mikutis is on the staff at Jack Lieb, with Mabel Consack doing optical layouts for Optix.

At the film labs there are a number of women doing various tasks ranging from inspection, printing and negative set-up to the prestigious and challenging job of color timing, which is done at Eagle Lab by a woman named Ruby Plotke.

Women animators include Anna Lena Keating, who specializes in three-dimensional animation and has her own studio in Evanston, Diane Goodrich of Magic Theater Company, Millie Goldsholt and Helen Olian.

Women writers include Selma Weisenborn, Joan Beugen, Ruth Ratny, Dorothy Eastline, Deirdre Walsh and many more.

There are very few women working in technical production jobs. Several of the women who produce do their own camera work—for instance, Maclovía Rodríguez, Donna Lee Johnson, Royanne Rosenberg and Anna Lena Keating. Pat Keaton free-lances as an assistant cameraperson and production coordinator.

And now we come to the question of the unions. Ms. Margie Leopold is officially the first female apprentice in Local 666, the camera local of I. A. T. S. E. (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators). But

the union doesn't help Margie find work.

Soundwomen are also too few in number. We hope to increase our numbers beyond Sue Davenport of Kartemquin Films, Georgia Deutsch of Universal Recording and free-lance Elaine Jacobs. A step in the right direction is being taken by Karen Hulstedt, who recently started a position in training at Zenith Cinema.

A call to Local 476, the "stagehand's union," yielded exactly three names: Kathe Swanson, who works free-lance as a hairdresser, Lillian Toth, a make-up person, and Betty Dworetz, a make-up person who doesn't choose to be working currently, although she holds a union membership. There are no women set designers in the union, no lighting technicians, no sound technicians, no women have ever been accepted for the apprenticeship program.

All the assistant producers, sales representatives and business managers would fill up a few more paragraphs and help to show the areas in which women are working in Chicago. Women aren't just typing up the scripts and making the coffee for the crews. They are selling, writing, producing, directing, shooting, recording, editing and distributing the films about products, services, concepts and all phenomena of life. They work in television stations, production companies, editing studios, on location, on stage and in the labs. They also buy films, and we could fill another few pages listing the women at the advertising agencies and public relations and audiovisual departments of large companies.

If it's a surprise to you how many women in Chicago are working actively in the film business, it was also a surprise to the women themselves. Ten months ago a group of twelve women got together to form a group dedicated to supporting each other's advancement in the film business. The group, now called Chicago Women in Film, has set up a network of communication and a program of education designed to get more women into better jobs in the business. A result of forming this group has been a rise in morale among group members and an added respect from employers and suppliers. The members, who number around fifty as of this writing, have seen their businesses prosper and job opportunities

increase, and they look forward to a time when there won't be a need for a film group composed of women only.

*Anna Lena Keating and  
Cathy Schubert*

*Anna Lena Keating received her B.F.A. from the Art Institute. Her forte is animation. In 1972 she won the Chicago Film Festival Gold Hugo for her film The Bedroom. She produced and directed School, which is being aired on Sesame Street this summer.*

*Kathy Schubert is a film editor and the owner of My Sister's Cutting Room.*

## Kartemquin Women

Kartemquin is a film group of fifteen men and women with a commitment to making political films. The fact that half the group are women is in itself unusual. The members, working in an anti-sexist atmosphere, are continually involved in skill-sharing and dedicated to working collectively.

It is our feeling that Kartemquin is one of few places where women are exposed to filmmaking experience and can obtain technical skills. These skills are hard to come by because they, as well as other highly technical skills usually are reserved for men. We are now skilled and experienced in sound recording, cinematography, editing and other production skills. We know that sharing these skills is necessary to make relevant political films and have developed them through patient dedication to teaching other and working together.

The people in Kartemquin have contributed a wide range past experience in the media and political organizing in order to develop a common perspective on what political documentaries are important to make. In general, we make films along with people and political groups with whose work we are sympathetic. We feel that working this way is tremendously important because our films are not just political and social statements but a valuable way to touch people and influence their lives and ideas. The only way to insure that the films will be effective in this way is to make them in conjunction with the people who are involved in organizing around that particular political issue and in political action. People who are involved in political struggles know best what films need to be made, what they should speak to, and how they can be most





useful. They are the people who will use the films for organizing. Kartemquin sees the importance of using their ideas and resources in conceptualizing, shooting, editing and distributing films.

We have found through the great amount of production we've been involved in in the last two years that the definition "cinema-verite" does not fully suit our work. We are interested in developing a progressive style of documentary filmmaking because in addition to recording what's actually happening on film we incorporate a leftist political analysis and vision, and this political understanding is an important aspect of our films.

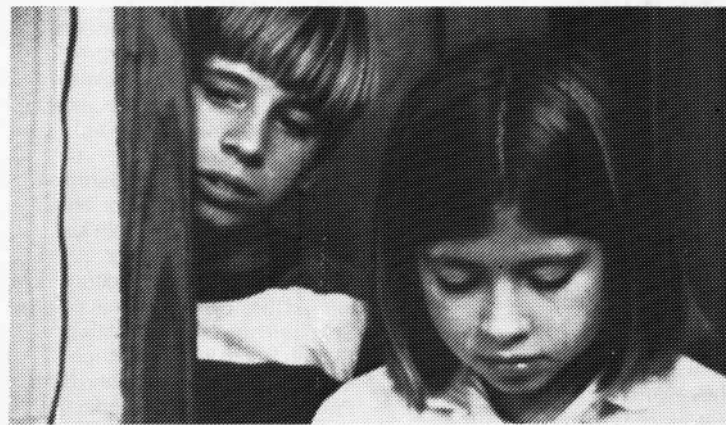
We are well aware, although our films intend to show "natural and unaltered interaction and social movement" from a particular political perspective, that the presence of a film crew and equipment inevitably affects the situation to some extent. We work to make our relationship with the people we're filming comfortable, and a crucial factor in our efforts to be unobtrusive is our filming equipment. We use a converted Auricon with a crystal sync Nagra with a silent beep light for sync to enable the cameraperson and soundperson to work cordlessly and quietly with the people we're filming.

Because Kartemquin shares a strong anti-sexist commitment as part of our broader political perspective, the women in Kartemquin do not work from a feminist position that requires them to work only on women's films with other women. We form working crews for films on the basis of interest and experience. For instance, in making the Chicago Maternity Center film about women's health care struggles in Chicago two women originated and carry major responsibility for the film but work closely with other men

and women in the production of the film. In making two films about kids in Chicago neighborhoods we deliberately made girls, as well as boys, important subjects in the films.

A grant from the Dolores Kohl Educational Foundation has enabled us to make two films that are neighborhood documentaries about kids living in the city. They are about the families of Pam and Scott Taylor, who live in the Armitage-Sheffield area, and Winnie Wright, 11, who lives in Gage Park. In *Now We Live on Clifton*, Pam and Scott tell how they love the alleys, playgrounds, shops and excitement of their city neighborhoods but also tell how the urban renewal going on in their neighborhood, as DePaul University expands and three-flats are converted into luxury apartments. Their friends' families are forced to move away because they can no longer afford to live there. *Winnie Wright, Age 11* focuses on the eleven-year-old daughter of a white, working-class family who live in the Gage Park area. The family, a counter to the Archie Bunker stereotype, has chosen to remain in the neighborhood and struggle against racism. Winnie reacts to her parents with the entire range of emotions of an eleven-year-old, from crabbiness to warmth, but also shows how she has incorporated their ideas of a better world. Speaking of the white families who moved out of the neighborhood when blacks began to move in Winnie's comment is, "They're so dumb."

A third film, *Viva la Causa*, documents the continuation of the Mexican mural movement in the Pilsen community. We see various Latino murals in the area and some of the revolutionary murals of Mexico that are their roots. The film follows one mural through from a sketch to its completion. Finally we



see the role of the community in creating and viewing that mural.

Other films that are near completion are a film about the fight to save the Chicago Maternity Center, which documents what a hopeful model of good patient-centered health care the center was for 78 years and how the priorities that determined that the Chicago Maternity Center should close and a Women's Hospital on the Gold Coast should replace it represent the priorities and interests that guide the health care empire in this country. This film was made in cooperation with WATCH (Women Act to Control Health Care), the Chicago Women's Liberation Union and other women involved in health care struggles in the city.

*Trick Bag* is a documentary about white working-class youth. They talk about their experiences of racism in the context of gangs, work, the army and housing and come to the conclusion that it is a "trick bag." As one woman says, "The Man's so slick he's got us fighting over the crumbs while he walks off with the whole pie." The film is being made in conjunction with *Rising Up Angry*, an organization that works with communities on the north and south sides.

We have made two videotapes, *It Can Be Done*, about the Women's Graphics Collective's making a poster for the United Farm Workers, and *Where's I. W. Abel?*, made for the District 31 Right-to-Strike Committee in the steel mills and concerning the "no-strike" pact signed by Abel, president of the Steelworkers Union.

In order to support the making of political documentaries we have developed an extensive commercial business. We have decided to finance our films in this way both because it has been more successful than trying to get money from grants and foundations and because it frees us from

dependence on them. Kartemquin receives money for equipment rental, including four Steenbecks; we also do freelance production work for clients, including scripting, producing, shooting and editing. Although everyone works on the political films, some people work in film commercially to earn their living and others earn their livelihood at other, nonfilm jobs. In general, the men have had more experience in commercial film work and are more likely to support themselves there than the women. In the past two years that we have been forming and growing, however, more women have gained professional film skills, so we now have women who work as sound recordists, producers, script writers, editors, assistant editors, cinematographers and conformers.

Strengthened by our collective method of work, our financial stability and the support of other political groups, we feel hopeful about creating new ways to use media in bringing about change in America.

*Alphonse Blumenthal, Jerry Blumenthal, Vicki Cooper, Sue Davenport, Sue Delson, Greg Grieco, Sharon Karp, Peter Kuttner, Betsy Martens, Mike McLoughlin, Gordon Quinn, Jenny Rohrer, Rich Schmichen, Teena Webb.*

# Independent Film

## The Personal Film

The tradition of independent filmmaking is as old as the medium itself. The earliest filmmakers, like Lumiere himself, worked on their own or with friends, shooting film in their local environs, making films to please themselves, and showing them to an audience whenever they could attract one. Commercial filmmaking was a later development, though its financial and technological power has since overshadowed independent film and imposed its own standard of entertainment on the medium.

The genre of independent film has nevertheless persisted and has become, now more than ever, the province of art. Its practitioners, who define themselves as film artists, make films for themselves as their own artistic statement, just as painters and sculptors have matter-of-factly worked for generations. With no obligation to "be entertaining" or to appeal to a mass audience, and without the oppressive weight of tradition that surrounds the other art media, film artists are uniquely free to experiment with their medium. Working alone and on a low budget, the result has been unorthodox editing, technical innovations, unprecedented camerawork, single framing, fast cutting, unusual focus: in short, changes in style that have produced an entirely new aesthetic.

Women have always been particularly attracted to the personal independent film and have made their most significant contributions to the art of cinema within its domain. Whether that choice has been economic, caused by the monolithic Hollywood power structure that so frustrated any auteur ambitions on the part of a woman, or artistic, prompted by a demand for personal autonomy and artistic control, the women who made it proceeded, in turn, to make a real contribution to the art of cinema and the state of society.

Certain trends are visible, within the tradition of independent filmmaking by women, that reflect these concerns. Women like Germaine Dulac in France and Maya Deren in the USA were pioneers of the avant-garde in film, artists who saw the possibilities of this new medium and worked at exploring its nature. As film became more established and accepted, women became more aware of its power as a tool for social criticism; filmmakers like Shirley Clarke turned from introspective

experiments to cinema-verite style films that dealt with social realities instead of fictions. The growth of the women's movement in the 1960's coincided with technical developments that made sophisticated 16mm equipment with synchronous sound much more accessible and economical; the result was a remarkable increase in women working in independent film, acutely aware of their own oppression by both society and society's idea of what they should be and determined to use film as a means of righting these wrongs through political statements. There was an emphasis on films dealing with feminist themes; often distributed through schools and libraries, traditionally female domains, they helped change that image. Women became more confident of the value of their own particular perspective and exploited that direction, turning in the past few years to an entirely new kind of film: acutely and unremittingly autobiographical documents, concentrating on the nature of family in our society, the meaning of patriarchy and motherhood, and the deeper problems involved in being a woman.

Alongside this markedly feminist line of development there has remained the strong tradition of film as art, with more and more women artists choosing film as their medium. Sometimes there is a perspective that appears female, sometimes not; but there is very often an emphasis on self, a need to expose one's own soul and the images of one's life to honest scrutiny.

The following films offer a partial view of these variant directions in women's independent films, with an emphasis on recent American work.

**BARBARA'S BLINDNESS**, 1965, Betty Ferguson and Joyce Wieland, Canada, 17 min. (N. Y. Film-Makers' Coop). There is no one named Barbara to be found; a pair of mysterious, blind-person's hands (looking suspiciously like Wieland's) make only one cameo appearance to "read" us the title; yet these seemingly incongruous elements provide the perfect introduction to the ironic humor of the film itself. The main source of the film seems to be an old, grade-school morality-movie on the appreciation of eyesight, starring a golden-haired Mary, who finds herself temporarily blind, and a leaden-voiced narrator, who finds

himself our unwitting straight-man. The filmmakers re-edited this curiosity and intercut it with other stock footage, of disasters, agricultural techniques, and monster movies, to create a very different object lesson on the nature of vision.

**BETTY TELLS HER STORY**, 1972, Liane Brandon, USA, 20 min. (New Day Films). Basically a monologue, this cinema-verite exercise demonstrates the value of repetition without becoming redundant. Betty tells her story, of a beautiful expensive dress and the fate that befell it and her both, and Brandon insists that she tell it again. The difference between the two is a vindication of the cinematic device and a surprisingly emotional experience. The filmmaker displays considerable skill at uncovering her subject's inner feelings without abusing the discovery. Liane Brandon is a Massachusetts-based filmmaker and teacher whose other films include **SOMETIMES I WONDER WHO I AM**, **ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE** (1971), and the recent **NOT SO YOUNG NOW AS THEN** (1974), filmed at Brandon's own high school reunion.

**BLACK PUDDING**, 1969, Nancy Edell, Great Britain, 7 min. (Creative Film Society). Dark and ominous creatures pour out of a Boschian vagina in an inexhaustible frenzy of animation. Edell is expert at summoning up the at-once comic and erotic personae of woman's nightmares. A transplanted Canadian, she has since made **CHARLIE CO.** (1972), featuring the same cast.

**CAFETERIA or HOW ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP HER DOWN ON THE FARM AFTER SHE'S SEEN PARIS TWICE?**, 1973, Judith Wardwell, USA, 1 min. (Canyon). Various described as "the short and sweet story of a girl and her 26 cows" or, more specifically, "Diana feeds calves imagination and granola to see life's possibilities from many viewpoints while tap dancing with a marble bear." All in one minute. Wardwell is a California filmmaker who has also made **PLASTIC BLAG**, **FLIMFLY** and **PASTEL PUSSIES**.

**CHOW FUN**, 1972, Sally Cruikshank, USA, 5 min. (c/o filmmaker). Addicts of Chinese food recognize the pun of the title, addicts of old 78-rpm records love the soundtrack, and addicts of Betty-Boop-meets-Looney-Tune animation go crazy over the high-stepping kaleidoscopic

imagery. Hand-drawn and brilliantly colored, this cartoon upholds the highest traditions of Saturday matinee entertainment, gives your eyes a workout, and proves that the genre of animation, which demands such masochistic enslavement of its artists, offers wondrous rewards. Sally Cruikshank has made two earlier films, **DUCKY** (1970) and **FUN ON MARS** (1971), and is at work on a major epic, the continuing adventures of these same ducky hybrids.

**FEAR**, 1973, Jean Shaw, USA, 6 min. (Women Make Movies). A rape fantasy with a happily feminist conclusion: the triumph of a courageous woman over her would-be rapist. Jean Shaw made the film as a student at the Chelsea Picture Station, a government-supported neighborhood workshop run by Women Make Movies; it's one of a series of films on urban themes made by workshop women.

**FINNISH FRUSTRATIONS** (**AMPUMARATA**), Eila Kaarresalo-Kasari, Finland, 8 min. (Odeon Films). Funded by a Finnish government grant, the film is an indictment of the sexual inequality in Finnish society, dramatized through a young girl's dance-hall encounter. The filmmaker currently lives and works in New York City.

**FUSES**, 1965-68, Carolee Schneeman, USA, 18 min. (N. Y. Film-Makers' Coop or Canyon). For some reason, this film is treated as a curiosity instead of a classic and has never really received the recognition that by now should be old hat. Several very complicated taboos work against it. Artistic distance, for one. It's an old tradition that the artist must keep a proper distance from her art or compromise its validity; though the events of the 60's dented this theory, it still endures and mitigates against **FUSES**. For the filmmaker had the nerve, brilliance, or bad taste (depending on your point of view) to star herself in this exploration of sexuality, her camera stationed in front of the bed while she and her lover, James Tenney, made love. It's an artistic risk, to be sure, and the mark of its success is the film's power of enchantment.

Because **FUSES** uses a vocabulary of images shared by pornography, that whole Pandora's box of moral-artistic fever has also come to plague the film. In fact, Schneeman's film and pornography are fundamentally opposite. Pornography is an anti-emotional medium, in content and intent, and its lack of emotion

renders it wholly ineffective for women. This absence of sensuality is so contrary to female eroticism that pornography becomes, in fact, anti-sexual. Schneeman's film, by contrast, is devastatingly erotic, transcending the surfaces of sex to communicate its true spirit, its meaning as an activity for herself and, quite accurately, women in general. Significantly, Schneeman conceives the film as shot through the eyes of her cat—the impassive observer whose view of human sexuality is free of voyeurism and ignorant of morality. In her attempt to reproduce the whole visual and tactile experience of lovemaking as a subjective phenomenon, Schneeman spent some three years marking on the film, baking it in the oven, even hanging it out the window during rainstorms on the off chance it might be struck by lightning. Much as human beings carry the physical traces of their experiences, so this film testifies to what it has been through and communicates the spirit of its maker. The red heat baked into the emulsion suffuses the film, a concrete emblem of erotic power.

Carolee Schneeman has made one other film, *PLUMB LINE*; organized inter-media events (in the late 60's) that were multi-sensory explorations of human relations; and has written a book, *Parts of A Body House*. She lives in New York with her 17-year-old cat; she is a constant reminder of the excitement of the creative process and of the joy and pain attached to being a woman and an artist.

*GLIMPSE OF THE GARDEN*, 1957, Marie Menken, USA, 5 min. (N. Y. Film-Makers' Coop or Grove). Marie Menken was one of the guiding forces of the New American Cinema who inspired, as surely through her personality as through her work, a new awareness of our physical environment and new methods for committing that awareness to film. Made after a 12-year hiatus, *GLIMPSE* is a lyrical, magnified look at garden flowers, reflecting her constant concern with the rhythms of daily life and the poetry of everyday images.

*HOME MOVIE*, c. 1973, Jan Oxenbergh, USA (Women's Film Co-Op, Northampton, Mass.). An autobiographical film, mixing old home-movie footage of the filmmaker's childhood with more recent footage of her present life, it becomes powerful through its use of this form to deal with the political

meaning of lesbianism as raised by the juxtaposition of the two different worlds. The narrator discusses the realities and stereotypes of lesbian life in often comic counterpoint to the visual images. The film is valuable for its avoidance of the clichéd romanticism that lesbian films often fall into.

*THE HOUSE IS BLACK*, Farooq Farokhzar, Persia, 20 min. Documentary on the life of a leper colony, by Persia's only woman director.

*I AM SOMEBODY*, 1970, Madeline Anderson, USA, 28 min. (Contemporary). A chronicle of the strike by 500 women, black hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina. Defying the state and local governments, they refused to give up their struggle and finally succeeded in winning recognition for their union. Madeline Anderson, a New York filmmaker and teacher, has captured the processes of building courage and political awareness that gave the group the strength to win.

*LIVING WITH PETER*, 1973, Miriam Weinstein, USA, 22 min. (c/o filmmaker). Cinema verité techniques are put to an interesting autobiographical use in this investigation of a filmmaker's personal dilemma. She and Peter Feinstein had been living together for some time without the benefit of marriage and with substantial ambivalence over that status. The film becomes a therapeutic device for exploring her own attitudes, as well as Peter's and her mother's, toward this modern living arrangement and the problems it poses for someone with traditional needs. *LIVING WITH PETER* is impressive for the frankness and honesty of its presentation, though its rather defensive point of view may strike some women as overly conservative. Miriam Weinstein teaches film in Boston, where she has made two subsequent films: *MY FATHER THE DOCTOR*, an interview, and *WE GET MARRIED TWICE*, a record of the marriage that followed the first film.

*MENSTRUATION*, 1974, Linda Feferman, USA (c/o filmmaker). Linda Feferman seems to be the only woman filmmaker working to create a fictional mode capable of dramatizing uniquely female life situations, emotional crises, rites of passage—with a sharp sense of humor usually absent in feminist film. Her most recent film, *MENSTRUATION* is a melodrama

centered on that traumatic stage in an adolescent girl's life when wearing shorts to the beach advertised it was "that time" and when the worst faux pas was to be seen by a member of the opposite sex while in the clandestine act of purchasing Kotex. Her earlier film, *DIRTY BOOKS*, is the tale of a nice girl out to make a fast buck writing pornography; the comedy arises from the inconsistencies between the life she lives and the fantasies she writes. A graduate of New York University Film School, Linda Feferman lives and works in New York City.

*MUTATIONS*, 1974, Lillian Schwartz, Canada, 7.5 min. (Cinema Femina). No misnomer, *MUTATIONS* is an animation that exercises all the possibilities of computer-generated colors and images in a continually changing pattern of abstractions. The cool, slick beauty of the shapes and tonalities reflects its electronic origins. Lillian Schwartz, originally a painter, became fascinated by the newest twentieth-century art medium, the computer. In collaboration with computer scientist Ken Knowlton (her partner on her films) she began producing computerized animations that chronicle, in their different styles, the successive elaborations of the programming languages. Their current work-in-progress is the product of a new technological advance (independent of Bell), a computer "wand" that paints any color in a palette of hundreds at the turn of a dial, with generative systems that are an equal improvement over previous limitations.

*NANA, MOM AND ME*, 1974, Amalie Rothschild, USA, 45 min. (Anomaly Films, NYC). Originally planned as a portrait of a grandmother, the film evolved into a far more provocative portrait of three generations of women and the differing motivations, philosophies and rivalries that shape their interaction. From the moment the filmmaker places herself in front of the camera to introduce her purpose, the viewer is involved (even taking sides) in her unabashedly personal search for the origins of her identity. Through Rothschild's insistence on probing the inner sanctums of her mother's and grandmother's lives and confronting them with her own, the film process itself effects a change in their understanding (Nana, perhaps, excepted) of each other as women, as artists, and as

embodiments of the cultures that caused their development. A New York filmmaker, Amalie Rothschild has made two other films, *WOO WHO? MAY WILSON* (1970) and *IT HAPPENS TO US* (1972).

*ONE DAY I ASKED*, Julia Alvarez, Colombia, 9 mins. (Tri-Continental). A Third-World film that examines the function of religion among oppressed peoples.

*ORFEO*, 1971, Carolyn Leaf, USA, 10 min. (Pyramid). The tragic tale of the Orpheus myth, dramatized through silhouette animation, is retold with a difference. The instability of form assumed by the silhouettes prefigures the fatal instability of the lover's resurrection and contributes to the magical mood of the animation. Leaf has also made *SAND*, another silhouette animation of a fable, this time of Peter and the Wolf.

*RAT LIFE AND DIET IN NORTH AMERICA*, 1968, Joyce Wieland, Canada, 16 min. (N. Y. Film-Makers' Coop). A very funny allegory of oppression and revolution, it's an Aesop's Fable as he should have written it, filmed for modern times with a stunning cast of guerilla gerbils and fascist cats. Wieland's characteristic emphasis on superimposed titles reaches its climax with these whimsical, ingeniously rabble-raising explanations of the on-screen action: imprisoned by the USA cat police, the "rats," led by their hero Skag Mitchell, break out of prison, hide out in a millionaire's kitchen, and escape to Canada, the land of the free, where they lead suitably organic and bucolic lives under the shadow of the final irony—that Canada, too, is under the control of the fat cats they thought they'd outwitted. A Canadian artist and filmmaker, Joyce Wieland has created a body of films, using simple imagery and minimalist sub-titles, that have redefined the basic premises of cinema and stand today as landmarks in the evolution of the structural film. Her films are distinguished by the incantatory power of their repetition and the ironic humor of their presentation. In addition to *RAT LIFE*, Wieland's filmography includes *BARBARA'S BLINDNESS* (with Betty Ferguson), *WATER SARK*, *SAILBOAT*, 1933, *HANDTINTING*, *CAT FOOD*, *LA RAISON AVANT LA PASSION* (REASON OVER PASSION) and *PIERRE VALLIERES*; she is now at work on her first feature film.



**RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME**, 1946, Maya Deren, USA, 15 min. (Grove). Though not as startling as her earlier work, this film is interesting for its exploration of the journey of a woman through a forebodingly symbolic interior landscape, fraught with tension over her certain, yet undefined, danger. **RITUAL** is additionally valuable for its depiction of the mysterious stringed obstacles she encounters, which seem inspired by Deren's own never-completed **CAT'S CRADLE**, a film of the Duchamp exhibit of elaborately chaotic string constructions. The ritualistic power and surreal style of Deren's films make them a continuing influence on avant-garde filmmakers. Considered the founder of the New American Cinema, Maya Deren may well be the single most important woman in film history. Originally a dancer (like many women filmmakers since), she recognized film's capacity to expand the purely spatial zone of choreography into the limitless temporal and psychological zones of the viewer's consciousness. She was an untiring popularizer of film as an art form, lecturing widely on college campuses and radio shows, stressing always that the camera eye was different from and superior to the human eye and could teach us to see anew. Her other films are **MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON** (1943, with Alexander Hammid), **THE WITCHES CRADLE** (1943), **AT LAND** (1944), **A STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA** (1945), **THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A CAT** (c. 1946), **MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE** (1948), **THE VERY EYE OF NIGHT** (1959), and several unfinished films, including the legendary, never-edited footage of the Haitian voodoo rituals that became the focus of her later life. Deren died suddenly in 1961 of causes variously rumored as stroke, apoplexy, and voodoo.

**RIVERBODY**, 1970, Anne Severson, USA, 6 min. (Canyon). In one calm continuous dissolve the entire staff, faculty, and student body/bodies (87 in all) of the San Francisco Art Institute pose naked for the camera. The film's fascination lies with the suspense of that magic moment, halfway between two persons, when the dissolve technique produces composite figures, oftentimes hermaphroditic, that inspire the kind of awe for the mystery of the human form usually reserved for time-lapse movies of developing

foetuses. The filmmaker has admitted that her initial motivation was curiosity about the physique of a certain kitchen boy. Nevertheless, her attraction to lists (whatever the origin), has continued to influence her films and dictate their forms. A California filmmaker now transplanted to London, Anne Severson's other films are **I CHANGE I AM THE SAME**, **NEAR THE BIG CHAKRA** (her controversial catalogue of full-frame vaginas that offends certain sensibilities), **INTRODUCTION TO THE HUMANITIES**, and **19 BYGONE SWEETHEARTS**. Her new film, **ANIMALS RUNNING** (1974), is a religiously respectful compilation of various animal species running and occasionally mating, lovingly edited into a Severson list from USSR film studies of animal behavior in the wild, all exquisitely photographed.

**ROLL OVER**, 1974, Marian Hunter, USA, 10 min. (c/o filmmaker). Produced by the New York Herstory collective, this message film on role-reversal is a morale-boosting experience. Street scenes of women working at man-size jobs (policewoman, taxi driver, construction worker, etc.) alternate with a situation comedy of a household where Mom reads the paper and catches the train while Dad chain-smokes, burns the breakfast, and yells at the kids. To the tune of a tough one-up-on-Dylan rallying song by Lavender Jane.

**SNOW WHITE AND ROSE RED**, Lotte Reiniger, Germany, 10 min. Often credited as the inventor of frame-by-frame animation, Reiniger used silhouette figures to create novel animated fairy tales, an unprecedented accomplishment at the turn of the century. She expanded her technique over the next decade, produced her feature-length masterpiece **THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE ACHMED**, and continued her series of fairy-tale animations. Though Reiniger stayed active in animation for some time, it was these early works that made her famous and remained her most significant achievement.

**TAKE OFF**, 1973, Gunvor Nelson, USA, 12 min. (Canyon). Ellison Ness, a thoroughly professional stripper, goes through her paces, bares her body, and then, astonishingly and literally, transcends it. Quite different from the warm, lyrical fantasies of Nelson's other films, this

black-and-white study has a metallic harshness that sets the audience on guard, only to upset their expectations, both sexist and feminist, with the unexpected trickery of its grand finale. While the film makes a forceful political statement on the image of woman and the true meaning of stripping, the intergalactic transcendence of its ending locates it firmly within the mainstream of joyous humanism and stubborn optimism peculiar to Gunvor Nelson's work. Other films by this California filmmaker are: **SCHMEERGUNTZ** and **FOG PUMAS**, both made with Dorothy Wiley; **KIRSA NICHOLINA**, **MY NAME IS OONA**, and **MOON'S POOL**, three colorful, poetic, and sunny films made on her own; and **ONE AND THE SAME**, made with Freude Bartlett in celebration of their friendship.

**WHAT I WANT**, 1971, Sharon Hennessey, USA, 10 min. (Grove, Canyon). A straightforward presentation of the filmmaker's seemingly all-inclusive list of desires, which she accommodatingly reads to us off an endless ream of computer print-outs. Her wishes span every extreme, from reasonable to irrational, petty to grandiose, serious to absurd. The film's absurd humor increases in direct proportion to her progress through her gargantuan list.

**WINDY DAY**, Faith and John Hubley, Canada, 10 min. (Film Images). With a soundtrack taken from an actual tape of their daughters' conversation, the animators created a whimsical vision of the little girls' make-believe world. As the girls on the soundtrack discuss the heavy and light responsibilities of womanhood, their on-screen impersonators are busy playing and metamorphosing in the animated splendor of childhood fantasy. In collaboration with her animator husband, Faith Hubley has developed a style of animation characterized by freeform line drawings and delicate washes of color so exceptional that comparisons are often made to Matisse.

**WOMEN**, 1974, Constance Beeson, USA, 11.5 min. (Film Images). Words—the definitions, stereotypes, and clichés of woman as sex object—are spelled out and illustrated in a series of dramatic portrayals that make the film a sharp expose of the treatment of women in our society. (One scene

of a mother and daughter discussing virginity is especially memorable.) A West-Coast filmmaker and video artist, Beeson is usually associated with a personal style of moody abstraction on an erotic theme; her other films include **THE NOW**, **STAMEN & WOMEN**, **ANN A PORTRAIT**, **UNFOLDING**, and **HOLDING**.

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT LARGE**, c. 1972, Freude Bartlett, 7 min. (Serious Business Co.). A warm and very funny portrait of the filmmaker and friends and the matriarchal society they constitute. Its most moving moment is a one-of-a-kind tableau of extremely pregnant women dancing naked; its funniest scene is a repeated loop of an infant falling over on its head, guaranteed to satisfy child-haters and -lovers both. Freude Bartlett is a San Francisco filmmaker who recently started her own distribution company, the Serious Business Co.

**WOMEN'S HAPPY TIME COMMUNE**, 1972, Sheila Page, USA, 50 min. (Women Make Movies). Championed as a Wild West feminist farce, this film has already attracted something of a cult following. Julia Lesage has written that "it combines a sophisticated attitude toward cinematic farce (a western à la Godard's **VENT D'EST** and slapstick like **WAITING FOR GODOT**) with a patter on issues about women that are frequently raised in the Movement, treated here in a wacky and irreverent and yet sympathetic way."

*B. Ruby Rich*

## Independent Filmmaking in the Midwest

This article is not intended to be a complete description of all the midwestern films that will be shown at **FILMS BY WOMEN/CHICAGO '74** but rather to give a description of some of the films that women in the area have been making.

The women's filmmaking collectives that have formed in the midwest have set for themselves varying tasks. Most groups want to demystify technology and have taught each other the techniques of filmmaking and video, especially camera work—long considered man's province. Some groups have put on film festivals, either films by women or films that elicit a discussion of the image of women



in Hollywood films. Some groups have made films specifically for consciousness-raising purposes. More recently, some of the groups have concentrated on video, since equipment and tapes are more readily available and economical than 16mm film equipment and lab costs and since there is often an immediate outlet for tapes made by these women on local public television, especially on community access programs. In Madison, since many of the women in the film group are radio and TV students at the University of Wisconsin, women have pressured the Communication Arts Program of the Speech Department to institute into the curriculum a regular course in film criticism from a feminist perspective.

Following below is a list of some independent films by midwestern women that I have seen and some others that friends have described to me enthusiastically. Some of them will be shown at the festival.

**April 3, 1973** is a short film made by Michele Citron in which the visuals are file cards that represent the activities in one day of three different women, each woman represented by a different color card. The cards are flashed on the screen at a rate that represents the passing of time during a day. As we read the cards and note the rapidity with which they are flashed, we see the activities of women presented in the film in an unstereotyped way—both in terms of the variety and the amount of activity thus symbolically presented. (Citron, c/o Radio/TV Dept., Temple Univ.)

**The Continuous Woman** is a 23-minute film made by the Twin Cities Film Collective for TV (Contact Darlene Marvey, 3555 Hamilton, Wayzata, Minn. 55391, for rental information about the collective's films.) The film shows moments in the lives of five women, who tell what they think about their womanhood in some detail. A Black teacher, a young lesbian, and three generations of women from a white, middle-class Minneapolis family are shown in their everyday environment. The film stresses

what all five have in common, especially the continuity of generations, although the film does not state that the lives of the first two women are in any way connected to the other three. Visually, the film has a professional quality, and it is the kind of film that is useful in a classroom situation or public lecture and discussion when you want to discuss sex roles in a non-threatening way. (If you've ever led such a discussion, you know how no one wants to identify with a "women's-libber" even though one—you—is standing there in front of them.)

**Dance Dialectic** by Martha Keller (1603 E. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor) is a 25-minute attempt to create modern dance both with dancers and out of the film medium itself. One is tempted to compare it with the work of Yvonne Rainer.

**Front and Back** by Lynn Cohen and Andrew Lugg (shown at the 16mm Festival, Ann Arbor, '74) has as visuals the most "plastic" looking postcards, such as the kind you get free in motels. The narration is what is written on the back of each card, a satire on triteness.

**Go-Go** by Bette Gordon (c/o Communication Arts, Speech Dept., University of Wisconsin, Madison) shows the experience of a woman auditioning for a job as a strip-tease go-go dancer, with the voice-over telling the young woman's feelings about this job. More recently, Bette Gordon has made an award-winning film about a relationship between two women. It is a 10-minute experimental film using optical printing and various techniques to manipulate time.

An Indian film in 35mm by Snehal Diksheet (Natataj Productions, Box 483, Ann Arbor) is not yet completed but parts of it are now available. The most interesting parts I saw were on child-care in northern India and on the dancing and clapping games played at an all-women's party.

**In Due Time** is a short film about a college woman who had a leg amputated and who learned to walk again. She is shown in this film in a restaging of her own experience in the hospital, and the film captures what was actually her first experience running again—in a baseball game. The film demonstrates the effectiveness of very brief films to make a statement about women's lives. By Tavi Fulkerson (712 Oakland #6, Ann Arbor).

Joan Strommer (1511 Rice St., Saint Paul, Minn.) is making social commentaries in 8mm in black and

white.

**Make-up and Reunion** by Glenna Jackson (University of Minnesota, Dept. of Studio Arts) are also short films of social comment, in this case dramatic portrayals of moments in women's lives.

**Methadone: An American Way of Dealing**, by Julia Reichert and Jim Klein (810 Ferndale, Dayton), is an important one-hour documentary showing the abuses of methadone and the fallacies in the way government agencies and treatment centers analyze the "drug problem" in the U.S. The first reel presents interviews with people under treatment in the Dayton Methadone Clinic and reveals that all they are able to do is to watch TV all day or stay in the methadone clinic or get the lowest kinds of assembly line job. No one of them knows anyone who has come clean from drugs entirely. There is also an interview with a government official with the U.S. Methadone Program in Washington who says, of course, that methadone is addictive, but that just insures that the people will keep coming back for "treatment," and that, furthermore, there haven't been any more "riots" in areas where they've started the program. The first reel is intended to be followed by an audience discussion of drug addiction in the U.S. The second reel gives a portrait of another way to come off drugs entirely. In the Rap family self-help drug program the aim is to change the social structure and not just to get people to adapt. It is a place for people to go after they have come clean in jail. In addition to encounter groups there are community action programs such as free food and clothing distribution programs that these people get involved within the community. The film ends with the warning that America does not have a drug culture—it IS a drug culture.

**Mrs. Richard Brand** by Karen Ohrn (602 E. 12th, Bloomington, Ind.) and Ann Lewis is a portrait of an old-fashioned woman.

**A New Film**, by Susan Lewis (R.R. 1, Box 154, West Branch, Iowa 52358), is a short, witty statement on what university life in Iowa is like, with long takes of endless telephone wires, accompanied by the radio weather report, and one long take from inside a college dormitory elevator, with women residents reacting in various ways to the filmmaker and the camera.

**Pelvic Party**, by the Bloomington, Ind., Feminist Film

Collective, is a short film on self-help examinations, intended to be used only by appropriate women's groups. (Contact Van Wert, c/o English Dept., Temple Univ.)

**Self Defense** is another short experimental film by Michele Citron which both makes a feminist point and provides a model for other filmmakers who might want to use the format of this or of **April 3, 1973** in another way. The visuals of **Self-Defense** are an overlay of fine fabrics and jewels and silhouettes of women practicing karate. The film starts out with just color and no figures, with an electronic music sound track. Slowly the figures of women in outline come into focus, first moving singly against a background of "women's things" and then moving forcefully in unison, free of that background. The title SELF DEFENSE flashes on at the end. It is a brilliant film.

**Tom's Film**, by Linda Klosky (2620 Third Ave. S., Apt. 4, Minneapolis) is a funny short experimental film with repeated actions of a man smoking, jumping up, and going to the door.

**Your Home Is You** is a fifteen-minute documentary by Martha Haslanger (1200 E. University, Ann Arbor). It has a voice-over commentary reading from a booklet of advice to brides while the visuals are pictures of model homes and model meals. The whole idea of taste depends on socialized patterns of consumption which appear "natural" to the upper-middle class. When translated into "rules" for lower middle-class and working class women in these bride booklets written to sell products, the consumption codes, this "taste," appear awkward and ridiculous. "What every woman knows" in the upper classes (identify china plates by their translucency, crystal by its ring when tapped) is wittily exposed as a superficial and foolish definition of a woman's role, especially in combination with the exaggerated visual picture of ideal homes and home life filmed in a glaring yellowish-red tone.

**Willow Tree** by Marlys Skelton (5336 26th Ave., Minneapolis) is a lovely short experimental film of a winter landscape shot in negative with an electronic sound track. Skelton is an unusual filmmaker in that she does all her own sound, processing, and printing, an especially difficult task with color film.

**Julia Lesage**

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# Workshops

## The Image of Women in Hollywood Films The 1920's: The Flapper

As the first liberated woman of the American cinema, the flapper plays a significant role in film history. Appearing in the heyday of Hollywood, she influenced millions of female viewers, who copied her image and imitated her antics. Her bobbed hair and loose clothes hinted at good times; her self-assurance and independence promised freedoms unknown to prior generations.

Less ethereal than previous Victorian virgins and more believable than viper-like vamps, the Hollywood flapper became the epitome of the new woman.

"Short skirts, boyish figures, silk stockings, step-ins, cigarettes, and drinking not only emancipated the modern girl from 'women's passive role' but freed her for masculine pursuits as well. The new girl was shown in airplanes, roadsters, and petting parties, with rolled stockings, hip flasks, bobbed hair, and bold aggressiveness" (from

Lewis Jacobs' *The Rise of the American Film*).

Created by women writers including Elinor Glyn, Anita Loos, and Rachel Crothers, the flapper took full advantage of the changing conditions which prevailed in the twenties. A full participant in the Jazz Age, she shed her lady-like inhibitions in favor of "the new morality."

The workshop on images of women in film in the twenties will concentrate on those aspects which typified the flapper: her looks, her demeanor, her morals and her aspirations, especially as portrayed by the "It" girl—Clara Bow. Attention will focus on her attitudes towards sex, work and marriage. As one of the screen's first good-bad girls, the flapper established patterns for Hollywood heroines in decades to come. The workshop will analyze these recurrent situations in the flapper films of the twenties. A film clip will be shown to provide an opportunity for first-hand viewing of this woman, who lent her name to an entire age.

Patricia Erens



Clara Bow

Adam's Rib



## The Big Tease: Women in Film, 1930-1945

The period between 1930 and 1945 is considered to be the golden era of Hollywood. Never before and never since have the quality and quantity of films in this country been matched. It is a point of great interest, then, that during this same period there was a plethora of women's movies (ie, movies about and for women) and women movie stars as well. Many films were titled with either "woman," or "lady" or had a woman's name in them. In addition, in the women's films of the period one major type emerges: the films about independent women. In this genre, which we call "the big tease", the film and the culture offer women false hope of independence and autonomy. It is a false hope, a mere tease, because what seems to be given (the opportunity to live a rewarding life) is never really given; this is amply shown by the film's usual conclusion: While the bulk of the film shows women living and wanting independent lives, capitulation occurs in the final reel. In almost every one of some 80 films that we have seen, the heroine walks off into the sunset with a man at her side—often negating the image of the film, where she longs for her own autonomy.

Despite the film's capitulating conclusion—which incidentally is often forgotten by film viewers—the independent-woman genre of film is a rarity that only occurs in any number in the 1930s and 1940s. In that genre the women depicted are deviant women according to cultural norms, for a woman who is strong and self-assured defies the cultural image of a dependent, frail creature leaning upon a male to secure her an identity. Fred MacMurray articulates the cultural view clearly in *Take a Letter, Darling* (1942): "If you are independent," he says to independent Rosalind Russell, "you cannot love; if you love, you

give up your independence."

Independence—which does not demand that a woman end up alone at the film's end but that she maintain her integrity—is well shown in the films of Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford and Barbara Stanwyck. Whether they played whores (Davis and Stanwyck; never Hepburn or Russell), aviatrix (Russell and Hepburn), writers (Davis, Hepburn, and Russell) or reporters (Hepburn, Davis, Russell), all of these women always evoked an image of authenticity and integration. In spite of the tease, their image prevailed as strong, whole women, an image that has disappeared in Hollywood films' depiction of women since.

Joyce S. Schrager and  
June Sochen

Joyce Schrager frequently lectures in the Chicago area on women in film. She is the co-author of the yet-unpublished *The Big Tease: Women in Film 1930-1945*.

June Sochen is a professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. She teaches women's history and the image of women in film. She is the author of several books on women.

## Images of Women in Film: The Post-World War II Period

Edgar Morin, in his book *The Stars*, provides perceptive analyses of the Hollywood star system and of the star as a fabricated and mythic figure. He suggests that the stars have a unique importance in terms of the dreams and fantasies of their fans and explores the relationship of star image and private personality. Today popular singing groups and TV personalities are filling the mythic functions that once were filled by movie stars. In the years immediately following World War II, however, film stars still maintained the status of gods and goddesses.

A study of the most popular female stars to rise after WWII indicates that they represented quite different types, types personified by Marilyn Monroe, Doris Day, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly/Audrey Hepburn. Although within their own films they played a variety of roles, studio publicity, their personal lives and the repetition of certain films roles led them to be categorized primarily as a single type of woman. While





such a generalization is valid in as much as it determined the kind of mythic rapport between the star and her fans, a close examination of the stars' actual roles reveals that such broad typing can be misleading and constricting. With the aid of structuralism and content analysis it is possible to reevaluate the films of each star and arrive at new and fascinating insights that not only deepen our understanding of the stars' mythic function but also of the intricate and complex patterns that distinguish the various phases of a single career as well as set one career apart from another.

Janice Welsch

## The Image of Women in the Films of the Sixties and Beyond

Women are an oppressed group, and their oppression can be seen both in the content of films and in the film industry. If we "read" Hollywood films in terms of their presentation of any group which is out of power and which is not making (any significant number of) feature films, we see that the American Indian, the worker, the student, the Black and *Women* are not allotted as many emotions, philosophical concerns, decisions to make and actions to perform in films as white, heterosexual (and usually middle-class), male characters, who are usually the protagonists. Sexism in cinema means not just an abusive picture of a woman as a "girlie" or sex object, but it means showing her major identity in terms of her sexual definition—lover or mother, or the corollaries, virgin or witch.

The workshop on the image of women in Hollywood films of the sixties will deal with the more general problem of how to analyze the way women are presented in feature films. First we will challenge what is accepted in the plot as "natural"—that a woman needs a man, that after getting married she settles down and stays at home. In *The Days of Wine and Roses*, for



example, the plot opens with Lee Remick and Jack Lemmon both holding demeaning jobs, but in the middle of the film she is shown at home with a baby. This is shown as something "natural" that has no need to be explained. After both of them become alcoholics, only Lemmon becomes sober again, and the end of the film shows Lemmon as an heroic parent because he has kicked alcoholism, taken a modest job, and is lovingly raising a child by himself. What is not challenged in the film and what is accepted as natural is that we should admire him as something special, when in fact thousands of single mothers work at low-paying jobs (the only ones usually available to unskilled single mothers are jobs as waitress, phone operator, store clerk) and do a good job of raising children besides—but they don't appear as heroines in films.

We can look at the range of actions allowed to a woman in a film and compare that with the actions allowed to a male character. We can look at situations where we see people in power and see what the visual attributes of these people are—usually a suit and tie. Women shown in a state of undress—bikini or nightgown—or in formal dress—are not shown as people in power. Vices that would be accepted in a man are shown as immoral, aggressive or irresponsible traits in a woman. Thus in *The Days of Wine and Roses* when Lee Remick is home alone with her baby, she sits and watches TV and smokes and gets quietly drunk. Her doing so is shown as a dereliction of her duty as a mother, which connotation is reinforced in the plot by having her fall asleep drunk while smoking and burn up all the furniture in the apartment. If we see a man on TV or in film sitting and watching TV and smoking and drinking, it is usually just a picture of Dad relaxing and watching a sports match. Even though in real life Dad may be getting quietly soused on beer while watching the Bear's game, this is not considered a dramatic moment for film.

By looking at the cultural conventions about women built into and exploited within feature films—on the level of plot and actions and on the level of connotations and symbolism—we can free ourselves from some of these conventions, learn how to criticize all films in a more sensitive way, and perhaps build a firmer conception of what a *women's* cinema might be.

Julia Lesage

## Political Filmmaking

All films, all art works for that matter, make comments on society, either explicitly or implicitly. Often it's the implicit statements that are the most powerful, and most of them are statements of support for the status quo: "Culture serves to protect society" (Arnold Hauser). Or, from Umberto Barbaro, "In Marxist thought, art is an aspect of the intellectual production of a given period, part of the corresponding ideology of a given time." Even Trotsky agrees: "Every ruling class creates its own culture, and consequently, its own art."

To oversimplify, if the heroes in our movies are all rich, handsome, and white, whatever the plot may be, a statement is made about the importance of being rich, handsome, and white. The history of American cinema, for example, is largely the history of the triumph of the individual, whether as a cowboy, detective, or war hero.

Political film critics have helped to make us aware of many hidden messages in feature films, and some political filmmakers have tried to work within the feature format to counter the dominant messages. Hollywood has even recognized the market for anti-establishment films but generally manages to stop just short of coming to grips with root causes or possible solutions.

The form, however, which needs to be watched just as closely as the feature for hidden messages is the documentary. Although we sniff at the idea of objective news coverage, we still cling to the idea that if it's actual footage of an event that we are watching, there must be an element of truth there. And often that's all there is—an element. There is no reason to exempt the documentary from the category of art which serves the dominant culture.

So if everything is a political film, nothing is a political film? That's not

very useful, so let's simplify and call a political film one which makes an overt political statement, one which analyzes and criticizes, for example, sexism or racism, or capitalism in general, a film which is conscious of its political statements. These films have a long history, beginning with *Potemkin*, continuing through *Salt of the Earth*, and today covering such diverse films as Godard's, the Newsreel collective's films, and *Mirages*.

One way to deal pragmatically with the question of the direction of a political film, especially adaptable to documentaries, and a way of integrating the politics behind the film into the actual production process, is to work closely with and take direction from those people who are the subject for the film and who constitute the intended audience. I seriously doubt, for example, that the NBC White Paper, *The Migrants*, did anything other than film the migrants answering whatever questions the news crew thought were relevant. The questions you ask, obviously, largely determine the kind of responses you will get, so that NBC's liberal bias was a foundation for the film from the beginning. Add to that Chet Huntley's "objective" but sympathetic father figure, and we have a film which reflects not the politics of the migrants but the plight of the filmmakers in trying to deal with it, blunting the film's usefulness for the subjects of the film themselves.

There is a reason, of course, why most documentaries are made in this objective outsider form. The migrants' analysis, if pursued, might be threatening to the whole structure which gives Huntley the rather high-salaried task of going down to Florida to be sympathetic with the migrants.

These award-winning documentaries often give me a sense of déjà vu. There we are, watching the old TV, and it's them against them: Packers against Cubs, white against Black, migrants against evil growers. It doesn't really matter whether it's *Monday Night Football* or *All in the Family* or *The Migrants*. It's never us against them, except in those cases where, as good upwardly mobile Americans, we are invited to identify with the affluent, the charming, the witty, and drink Gallo wine. And it's all done through that clever invention, objective journalism, for it does just that—it objectifies the people and thrusts us into the role of observer rather

than participant. And in directing all remarks to a white middle-class audience, these documentaries only solidify the idea that most of us are just fine and it's just a few loose ends, a few fringes that need to be tidied up, and all will be great—totally blunting any class analysis.

The obvious alternative, if one wishes to make a film which is really useful to the migrants, is to make a film in conjunction with them, working closely with them. In fact, the United Farm Workers have done precisely this, making their own film about their own struggle, a film which does not portray them as beaten down and passive but as taking an active role in bettering their own lives. One group in Chicago, Kartemquin Films, relies heavily on this method in making their films. (See Kartemquin article in this booklet.)

The obvious usefulness of this method is that filmmakers are no longer working in a vacuum. They are assured, in the process of production, that the film will not be thrust into an uncaring world but that there is a concrete need which that film is filling. This also kills the convenient excuse for those who have made what they thought was *The Revolutionary Film* but which sits sad and lonely in its can: "Oh well, What's the point? People don't care about politics anyway."

Another thing which working in conjunction with groups does is to begin to break down the mystification of the filmmaking process. People can begin to see that it is not a necessity of the medium that films take the forms and attitudes that they are accustomed to seeing, and this discovery feeds a valid, healthy cynicism about much of the information that we are fed daily.

Finally, making films in conjunction with political groups provides for a response when it's all done. Critics' evaluations and festival awards become less important than the reactions of the people the film was made for and about. Their criticisms, both positive and negative, provide a concrete direction for the filmmakers to go in making their next film a better one. Working with groups also provides fertile ground for ideas for new films. I made, for example, a film about the wall murals in Chicago. Muralists congratulated my good intentions but said, "You know, what would really be helpful would be a film that showed a mural actually being done, not just the finished product."

So now there's a second mural film. Films beget films, as Jay Leyda says, but what this means is that in working and testing, working and testing, these political films become experimental in a very basic way.

In looking at the process of making a film, we should also examine the way filmmakers work with each other. In making most films someone is in charge, the someone who had the idea and/or the money, and that someone decides what is going to happen. At least that's the theory. Actually, films are made by groups of people, and this fact has kept film critics busy for years with the problem of whom to credit. Their assumption seems to be that if there is a work of art, there must be an artist. What should be perfectly obvious from looking at any list of credits is that a large number of people make a fairly large contribution to most films. Thus film is particularly amenable to cooperative working situations, political films even more so since the goal is not the traditional one of money or fame but of influence and effectiveness. The question then becomes one of just how to make the most useful and effective political statement.

What this means is a respect not only for filmmaking skills and experience but for political skills and experience as well. In a recent Kartemquin production, for example, the grip had little filmmaking experience but did have a valuable rapport with the people being filmed. In situations where the grand total of skills and experience is considered, it is hard for any one person to come out as top dog. Working cooperatively, with respect for all skills and experience, along with sharing the benefits of those skills and experiences, seems to be a good way to begin breaking down the traditional barriers against women in the filmmaking industry.

Most political films being made today seem to be documentaries, although Hollywood and independents working Hollywood-style also make some features which are political. But the question of what form a film should take depends mainly on the intended audience, the intended use of the film. The farther one gets from the intended audience, the more difficult it is to know whether a film is going to speak to it, but there are, for example, women making experimental films, such as Michele Citron's *Self-Defense*, which carry a political message. Similarly, a documentary is not inherently and

necessarily a political film simply by virtue of being documentary.

The reason why many political filmmakers turn to documentaries is essentially that a documentary situation is a real one. A white filmmaker cannot as easily impose his or her views of what it is to be Black if she or he is filming an actual situation with Black people. Also, because it is real, a documentary carries that impact of reality through to the audience—sometimes falsely, as we have seen. But it becomes difficult to dismiss a powerful documentary as "just a movie." And finally, political filmmakers are not a wealthy lot, and documentaries are generally cheaper than trying to stage a dramatic feature film.

As filmmakers, whether we consider ourselves to be political or not, our task is to be conscious of the implicit political content of any image we choose to present and to respect the political power of our medium. Those of us who consider ourselves political filmmakers must go even further in examining the politics of our own modes of work, the forms best suited for our intended audience, and the message which best expresses that audience's own desires, possibilities, and struggles. As Ernst Fischer says, "In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it."

Teena Webb

*Teena Webb teaches at Central YMCA Community College and works with Kartemquin Films.*

## Women and Video

**Distribution of women's tapes: Videopolis, 2550 N. Halsted, Chicago**

A few years ago the Japanese invented simple, portable and inexpensive television production equipment. The availability of this "porta-pak"—video in the half-inch

format—made it possible to begin to change who makes television, for what reasons and in what setting. Until then television could only be based in mass economics/mass audience, in professionalism/unionism. Suddenly one person with an idea could begin to tinker with that familiar and most moribund, of our communications media.

The "porta-pak" was greeted as the embodiment of a revolution in television by artists, community organizers, ethnic Americans, political outcasts—in short, people who felt that regular broadcast television was not representing their interests and concerns. In a general sense these people were united in the conviction that television had not even come close to exploring its potential. They were determined to create "experimental television." The result was the "alternate media" movement.

What we are trying to do in this festival is to isolate one particular group of "alternate media" practitioners—women—and present a representative sampling of what television is like when the means of production are directly in the hands of the people most concerned with the subject matter of the program. Our criteria for choosing tapes for showing was simple: we got in touch with women we knew to be consistently involved in videotape making and asked them to send us a recent tape which would be suitable for a women's tape show. Although we tried to impose no further standards as to "quality" of the tapes, we did try to make sure that the various levels of video experimentation—artistic, community, journalistic, political—be represented. The tapes therefore range from ones meant to have an effect on social or political problems by reaching a small and directly concerned audience to ones which represent attempts to change the styles and formats of broadcast television by interpreting an event or idea for a large audience and to ones which



Videopolis



are purely personal statements which stand on their own.

These tapes differ from films in a number of aspects. Broadly speaking, the greatest difference might be in that the videotape maker has no tradition against which to measure her efforts. Because the medium is a radically new development in communications, there has been a determination to discard previous standards of "quality" in order to be free to discover the "rules" most logical for video. The thinking has been that much of film has been an imitation of the stage and most of television an imitation of film. People now feel video should not simply add one more layer to this pastiche by imitating broadcast television.

The result of so open a definition of video has very often been bad video, self-indulgent in content or technically so poor as to be inaccessible to any but the most directly involved audience. But gradually what works as video is beginning to become clearer.

The equipment is extremely simple to use. Because just about anyone can learn to make tapes, the videotape maker cannot consider herself a member of a special class of "professionals" who attain that status only after intensive training and practice. One of the effects of this is that in video—with the exception of abstract video—the emphasis is generally on information instead of entertainment, on content and point of view instead of style and artistry.

The equipment is inexpensive and the tape reusable. Because just about anyone with determination can finance the making of a tape, the pressure to create a "work" of enduring interest does not exist. The effect of this is that video can serve immediate or transitory goals of interest to only a few as well as express a vision or interpretation meant for consideration by many. And in either case if you don't like what's

been done, more often than not you can simply start over again.

The equipment is portable and flexible: It runs on batteries, running time is at least a half-hour, there's synch-sound, little light is needed. Because it can go to the event itself and because it interferes with the event only minimally, video can record what actually happens as opposed to relying on a recreation after the fact via commentary, narration and interviews in more manageable settings like studios. The effect of this is that video can present intuitive information which allows the viewer to understand the subject matter in a direct way.

Tapes can be shown on any home television set, on closed circuit and cable television, on cassettes or, because of recent technological advances, on broadcast television. Because the videotape maker can choose the manner of distribution most suited to the program, she can pin-point her audience and use the medium as broadly or narrowly as she feels is appropriate to the subject and to her skills. The effect of this is that she can learn to use video as a tool for some particular end until, and if, she is ready to use video as media perse.

To set out the characteristics of video in this dry a manner seems necessary at this point because in the past there have been over-inflated claims about the potential of the medium to revolutionize communications. There have been cries of "Democratize the Media" and "Access to the People." They came from the excitement of the new discovery of television by a generation which grew up with the tube as a familiar fact of life.

But as women—as some of the people with sudden access to television—we feel this excitement still, despite our reservations as videotape makers against claiming too much. We know that women have been consistently excluded from any but subsidiary work in

television, both on a production and technical level. The "porta-pak" makes it possible for women to learn the technical skills of television so that they can begin to make programs which directly represent their point of view toward their own problems and accomplishments. These programs might be addressed only to women, or they might be aimed at everyone. The point is that we no longer need to rely on the occasional "specials" on rape or divorce or other currently hot media subjects to examine issues of concern to us. And we no longer need to sit passively while television presents the same male-interpreted face of women to the millions sitting before the television set each night.

#### Anda Korsts

*Anda Korsts is a journalist in public and a painter in private. She turned to video—the "alternate television movement"—in reaction to what she considered the stultified manner in which the electronic media dealt with information and news.*

## From Concept to Can: Commercial Film-making Workshop—

Most television viewers know that a lot of work goes into the making of a commercial—the key ingredients being time and talent. Few people, however, realize the procedural steps behind the finished product: writing, direction, editing and so forth.

A group of Chicago women, actively involved in every aspect of commercial filmmaking, are dedicated to the proposition that what goes on off-camera is just as interesting as what appears on screen. FILMS BY WOMEN/-CHICAGO '74 has corralled their considerable talent to present "From Concept to Can," a two-day, step-by-step look at how a 30-second spot is actually made.

The session begins on Saturday, September 7, in Tribune Tower's Campbell Hall (room 771); Noel Weimer and Martha Pitts of AdCom, Inc. will conduct a workshop on commercial writing techniques, demonstrating the solution of a particular marketing problem. They will also discuss the conceptualization of the commercial to be filmed in the Production Workshop. Myrna Ravitz of Cine-Pac Productions will convene a job description workshop featuring a panel of

women who work in film in varying capacities: as set designers, food consultants, stylists, etc. Later in the day, Jackie Rivett of Life Style Productions will direct the actual shooting of a commercial for the Equal Rights amendment. It is intended that the audience participate in the shooting process by question-and-answer periods, etc.

The following Saturday, September 14, Carol Cross, CBS editor, Brita Paretzkin, and Kathy Schubert of My Sister's Cutting Room will offer an in-depth demonstration of editing techniques—for documentaries, commercials and TV news footage (from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.). In addition they will edit the commercial shot at the preceding session.

"From Concept to Can" is aimed at the novice filmmaker as well as the armchair critic. Since enrollment is limited, pre-registration is advised.

Stephanie Goldberg

## Cutout Animation Workshop

Cutout animation eliminates the expense and work of cel animation, which requires individual cels placed on pegs for registration, many thousands of which are needed often for a film. Both techniques shoot at 24 frames for one second of film viewing, and the cameras and stands can be the same. Cel animation is obviously more fluid, but cutout figures have a charm of their own, and the latter's special effects have superior results.

A single-frame release is used to activate the camera, which may be Super 8, regular 8 or 16mm. It should have reflex viewing and focusing to show exactly what the lens sees. An inexpensive copy stand with fixed lights can be modified to use as a compound table. Much ingenuity can go into a homemade stand, with results equaling those of costly professional stands. A light meter marked in frames per second, an editing set and a projector complete one's equipment.

Art materials have a wide range, but two-ply, smooth-finish Bristol board is the mainstay, heavy enough to withstand handling yet able to absorb paints nicely. Unlimited types of papers, crayons, acrylics, poster paints, felt pens and various inks are used extensively.



# Resources

Ways to hold cutouts flat range from magnetic boards with magnetic strips to a platen with a non-glare glass top and various types of adhesives.

A cutout character requires front and back views, left and right profiles and as many "in-betweens" as the filmmaker feels are necessary. Diminishing sizes are also necessary for perspective for the more advanced. Hinging a figure can be done in many ways, from Scotch tape and thread to a more complicated method of punch-outs which are put back in place and act as a joint pivot. If backlit black silhouettes are used, no hinges show, but a great deal is lost from lack of color.

Without a sense of timing a character may rush in and out of a scene, leaving the viewer confused. Timing must be felt within. The action can be acted out by the animator to see how long it takes plus to determine what distortion she might want to give it. Animation books are helpful here, but with practice the animator can get the "feel" of how many frames she will need to create what she wants to see up on the screen. Here is where a storyboard comes in handy: with the help of one the animator can outline the plot by means of rough sketches of continuous scenes and work out the timing before filming begins.

Special effects are the most interesting part of cutout animation, a bonus which supercedes anything done in cel animation. A moving cutout of a fish filmed under a glass dish of water which is wiggled with a finger gives an effect of a fish swimming in a real sea. Fiber optics can turn a scene into a fairyland of twinkling lights or form a whale's spout arching skyward in a light-strewn spray. Cutout animation is a challenge to the imagination, and anyone accepting it is rewarded by richly graphic filmmaking.

*Helen Olian*

## Resources on Women and Film

**WOMEN AND FILM: A RESOURCE HANDBOOK** is a useful booklet which tells you how to plan a film festival, has a list of feature length films pertinent to women's roles, and a complete listing of all the films with a description of them and distributors for them from the First New York Women's Film Festival. There is also a listing of short films and slide shows. Some of the information below comes from this booklet. It is available from The Project on the Status and Education of Women, Assoc. of American Colleges, 1818 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

**DIRECTORY OF FILMS BY AND ABOUT WOMEN** has about 400 titles indexed by topic, title, and filmmaker, including distribution information. Cost \$3 (\$5 for institutions). Women's History Research Center, 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, Calif. 94708.

**WOMEN IN FILM: A BIBLIOGRAPHY** lists a variety of films by categories as these: films by women directors, herstory, image of women, minority women, and self-development and socialization. Annotation, prices, sources, bibliography. Women in the Arts, Albany Area NOW, Box 6064, Albany, NY 11568.

The most complete **BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARTICLES ON WOMEN AND FILM** as well as a set of essays on the image of women in film is available from The British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London W1, England.

**FILM COMMENT**, vol 8, no 4, Dec. 1972, pp. 33-45, has an article about women directors followed by extensive filmographies of 150 early and present women directors.

**THE VELVET LIGHT TRAP**, no 6, Fall, 1972, ran a special issue on Sexual Politics and Film. 75c or \$2.50/yr. Arizona Jim Co-op, 522 State St, Apt B, Madison, Wisc. 53703.

**OFF OUR BACKS**, a feminist monthly paper, has a culture section each month with detailed descriptions of women's films, film festivals, video. A valuable resource. 35c/sample. \$6/yr. 1724 20th St NW, Washington, DC 20009.

**WOMEN AND FILM** magazine includes critical studies, reviews, articles. \$2/yr (\$4.50 for institutions). 2022 Delaware St. Berkeley, Calif. 94709 OR 2802 Arizona Ave., Santa Monica, Calif. 90404.

**TAKE ONE**, vol 3, no 2, devoted an issue to women and film. Single issues, 40c. Twelve issue subscription, \$4.50. Unicom Publishing Company, PO Box 1778, Station B, Montreal, 110, Canada.

**FILM LIBRARY QUARTERLY** devoted its winter 71-2 and winter 72-3 issues to women and film. \$2/copy. Box 348, Radio City Station, New York, NY 10019.

**A FEMINIST LOOKS AT EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE MATERIALS** is feminist Lois B Hart's evaluation of existing software (tapes, films, records, filmloops and transparencies). Criteria for evaluating these elementary and secondary school materials included: the number of women in the materials, their identity, the manner in which they were presented, the degree of sex stereotyping in vocational guidance materials, the portrayal of the women's movement of the past and present, and how family roles were portrayed. Hart's data are given; the nine companies are rank ordered, and some specific material are recommended. \$1. Everywomen's Center, Munson Hall, U of Mass, Amherst 01002.

**LA FEMME & LE FILM: WOMEN AND FILM, TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 1973**; invaluable brochure; with pictures and descriptions of all the films and directors, along with distribution information. 50c. 9a Charles Street West, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1R4, Canada.

**WOMANHOOD MEDIA: CURRENT RESOURCES ABOUT WOMEN** is a 335 page guide by Helen Wheeler that has six parts: women's liberation awareness inventory, human equality, basic book collection, non-book resources (film), sources and appendices. Available for \$7.50 from Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J.

**FEMINIST RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES: A GUIDE TO CURRICULUM MATERIALS** is a 16 page annotated bibliography of books, pamphlets, slide shows, films and tapes. Edited by Carol Ahlum and Jacqueline M Frailey. \$1.25. The Feminist Press, Box 334, Old Westbury, NY 11568, MS, August, 1973 issue lists two dozen films by and about women, giving distribution information and prices.

**FILMS ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT** is an annotated list of about 90 films, mostly shorts, by Janice Mendenhall, Federal Women's Program Coordinator, General Services Admin., Washington, DC 20405.

**NEW DAY FILMS** is a distribution co-operative for films by and about women. New address is PO Box 315, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417.

**WOMEN MAKE MOVIES, INC.**, 257 West 19th St., New York, NY 10011, is the distribution outlet for films made by urban women at the Chelsea Picture Station as well as for Sheila Paige's farce **THE WOMEN'S HAPPY TIME COMMUNE**. Films available for rental or purchase. Write for catalog.

**THE WOMEN'S FILM CO-OP** has a catalogue of films by and about women, distributed both by themselves and other companies. Contribution requested for catalogue. 200 Main Street, Northampton, Mass 01060.

**WOMEN: CHOICES AND CHALLENGES** is a series of tapes of 13 half-hour programs made for public broadcasting, and is an "attempt to air the critical issues and concerns faced by the movement for women's rights and to portray women within their full range of their potentialities." Available at cost to groups seeking to upgrade the status of women. For information concerning the tapes, contact Director of Programming, WETA-TV, Arlington, Va. 22206.

**NEWSREEL**, a group of independent filmmaking and distribution organizations, has a variety of films concerning the women's movement. 322 7th Ave, NY 10001 OR Antioch Union, Yellow Springs, Ohio. A number of films concerning women are available from **LIFELONG LEARNING**, Univ. of Calif., Extension Media Center, Berkeley, Calif. 94720. Free catalogue.

**WHOLE FILM CATALOGUE**, Films inc., 1144 Wilmette, Wilmette, Illinois.

Indiana University Audio Visual Center will publish a booklet on films from the **WOMEN'S MOVEMENT** and documentary films by women, by Carolyn Geduld. Available Fall '74.

**CINEMA FEMINA**, 250 West 57th St, New York 10019, is a new referral service where you can get all the films shown at the 1st Int'l Festival of Women's Films in N.Y. in 1972 and also speakers in the area of women & film.

**JUMP CUT**, 3138 W. Schubert, Chicago 60647, is a new film periodical, coming out six times a year, which regularly has articles on women's films and encourages a feminist perspective in all its critical pieces. It is a good new outlet for women interested in writing feminist criticism. Most of this listing of resources on women and film was taken from Jump Cut, No 1, May-June, 1974.

**IMAGE ET SON** #283, April, 1974 ran a special issue, "Les femmes et le cinema," in conjunction with The Paris Festival Musidora of women's films. It has theoretical & creative articles rather than just a listing of films.

*Julia Lesage*

# Schedule

# Sept. 3-17

## Tuesday

# 3

5:30 P.M.

THE BLUE LIGHT—Leni Riefenstahl (1932, Germany)  
Director has been invited to speak  
RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME—Maya Deren (USA, 1946)

8:00 P.M.

Repeat  
BLUE LIGHT—RITUAL

## Saturday

# 7

9 A.M.-5 P.M.

COMMERCIAL FILM MAKING  
PART I—Campbell Hall—\$10.00 fee

1 P.M.-5 P.M.

Four discussions on the image of women in men's films—Art Institute—Free

3 P.M.-5 P.M.

Panel discussion—women's images in films, with author Joan Mellon and Chicago women critics.

1 P.M.-4 P.M.

Videotape screenings and workshop—Art Institute—Free

7:00 P.M.

CLEO FROM 5 TO 7—Agnes Varda (France, 1961)  
Director has been invited to speak  
RIVERBODY—Anne Severson (USA, 1970)

9:00 P.M. Repeat CLEO—RIVERBODY

## Wednesday

# 11

5:30 P.M.

DESTROY, SHE SAID—Marguerite Duras (France, 1969)  
ONE DAY I ASKED—Julia Alvarez (Colombia)

8:00 P.M.

SAMBIZANGA—Sarah Maldoror (Angola, 1972)  
THE HOUSE IS BLACK—Farough Farokhzar (Iran)  
RAT LIFE AND DIET IN NORTH AMERICA—Joyce Wieland (Canada, 1963)

## Sunday

# 15

5:30 P.M.

A VERY CURIOUS GIRL—Nelly Kaplan (France, 1969)  
Director has been invited to speak

8:00 P.M.

Repeat—CURIOUS GIRL

## Wednesday

# 4

5:30 P.M.

PEASANT WOMEN OF RYAZAN—Olga Preobra jenskaia (USSR, 1927)

8:00 P.M.

NANA—Dorothy Arzner (USA, 1934)  
SNOW WHITE AND ROSE RED—Lotte Reiniger (Germany)

## Sunday

# 8

5:30 P.M.

OUTRAGE—Ida Lupino (USA, 1950)  
FEAR—Jean Shaw (USA, 1973)

8:00 P.M.

DANCE, GIRL, DANCE—Dorothy Arzner (USA, 1940)  
CHOW FUN—Sally Cruikshank (USA, 1972)  
TAKE-OFF—Gunvor Nelson (USA, 1973)

## Thursday

# 12

5:30 P.M.

DAISIES—Vera Chytilova (Czechoslovakia, 1967)  
WHAT I WANT—Sharon Hennesy (USA, 1971)  
LITTLE JOYS, LITTLE SORROWS—Jadwiga Kedzierzawska (Poland)

8:00 P.M.

DREAM LIFE—Mireille Dansereau (Canada)  
FUSES—Carolee Schneemann (USA, 1965-68)

## Monday

# 16

5:30 P.M.

CHICAGO AND MIDWEST FILMS

8:00 P.M.

SECOND PROGRAM OF CHICAGO AND MIDWEST FILMS

## Thursday

# 5

5:30 P.M.

A HOUSE DIVIDED—Alice Guy-Blaché (USA, 1913)  
HER DEFIANCE—Cleo Madison (USA, 1916)  
THE BLOT—Lois Weber (USA, 1921)

8:00 P.M.

WILD PARTY—Dorothy Arzner (USA, 1929)  
ORFEO—Caroline Leaf (USA, 1971)

## Monday

# 9

5:30 P.M.

PIT OF LONELINESS—Jacqueline Audrey (France, 1957)  
WOMEN—Constance Beeson (USA, 1974)  
GUERRILLA COMMERCIAL—Alexis Rafael Krasilovsky—(USA, 1973)

8:00 P.M.

CRAIG'S WIFE—Dorothy Arzner (USA, 1935)  
CAFETERIA—Judith Wardwell (USA, 1973)  
MUTATIONS—Lillian Schwartz (USA, 1974)

## Friday

# 13

5:30 P.M.

LION'S LOVE—Agnes Varda (USA, 1969)  
LIVING WITH PETER—Miriam Weinstein (USA, 1973)

8:00 P.M.

PROMISED LANDS—Susan Sontag (USA/France, 1974)  
FINNISH FRUSTRATIONS—Eila Kaarresalo-Kausari (Finland)  
ROLL OVER—Marian Hunter (USA, 1974)

## Tuesday

# 17

5:30 P.M.

ATTICA!—Cinda Firestone (USA, 1974)  
I AM SOMEBODY—Madeline Anderson (USA, 1970)  
HOUSE OF MUD—Atiat El Abnoudi (United Arab Republic)

8:00 P.M.

NANA, MOM AND ME—Amalie Rothschild (USA, 1974)  
WOMEN'S HAPPY TIME COMMUNE—Sheila Paige (USA, 1972)

## Friday

# 6

5:30 P.M.

MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM—Leontine Sagan (Germany, 1931)  
MENSTRUATION—Linda Feferman (USA, 1971)  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT LARGE—Freude Bartlett (USA)

8:00 P.M.

CHRISTOPHER STRONG—Dorothy Arzner (USA, 1933)  
BARBARA'S BLINDNESS—Joyce Wieland and Barbara Ferguson (Canada, 1965)  
BLACK PUDDING—Nancy Edell (G.B., 1969)

## Tuesday

# 10

5:30 P.M.

LOVING COUPLES—Mai Zetterling (Sweden, 1964)  
WINDY DAY—Faith Hubley (USA)

8:00 P.M.

COOL WORLD—Shirley Clarke (USA, 1963)  
HOME MOVIE—Jan Oxenberg (USA, 1973)

## Saturday

# 14

9 A.M.-1 P.M.

COMMERCIAL FILM MAKING  
PART II—Campbell Hall—\$5 fee

1 P.M.-4 P.M.

Videotape screenings and workshop—Art Institute—Free

1 P.M.-4 P.M.

Political and community action film making—Campbell Hall—Tribune Tower—Free

1 P.M.-5 P.M.

ANIMATION WORKSHOP—room 533, Tribune Tower—\$5 fee

7:00 P.M.

ANTONIA—Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow (USA, 1974)  
Director has been invited to speak

9:00 P.M. Repeat—ANTONIA